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Adventure

A POPULAR PUBLICATION

AUGUST

MAN AT ARMS!

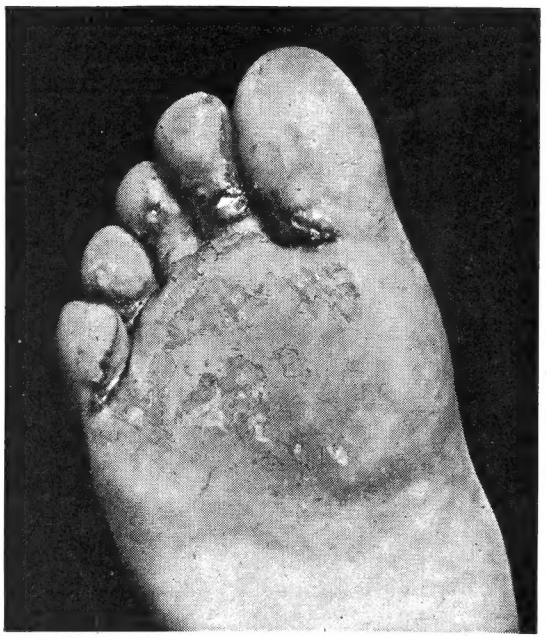
FOREIGN LEGION NOVELETTE BY

GEORGES SURDEZ

AUGUST

ADVENTURE

15 Cents



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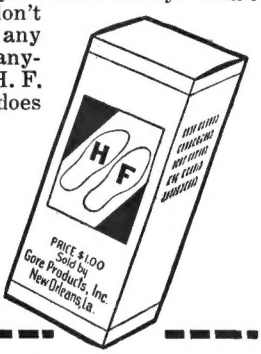

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or the fates. For the benefit of the friend you seek, give your own name and full address if possible. All inquiries along this line, unless otherwise designated, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, every inquiry addressed to "Lost Trails" will be run in three consecutive issues.

Wanted—address of Pearl Halligan West or children, Leo, Charles, George or Iona. Also Jessie or Hugh Cooper. All lived in Omaha, Neb., 1922, formerly of Fort Dodge, Iowa. Write to Blanche Mathis, 715-10th Ave., Seattle, Wash.

Wanted—information, descendants of Byron and Mary A. Clarke, whose children were: William H. H. Clark, Civil War Veteran, had son Frederick, lived Palmer, Mass.; had jewelry store there in 1868. Alice Clark, married Martin I. Whitman, M.D., lived Chicago, Ill., 1868, had two children then. Delland Clark, married Charles Arnold, lived Vineland, N. J., moved to Florida, then to Spartanburg, S. C., had children, Charles and Ida; Aaron B. Clark, wife's name Hannah, lived 1869 Springfield, Mass.; had two sons, Harry and Allie. Carrie Clark, married Mr. Jones, lived Chicago, Ill., 1868. Columbus Clark. Lucinda (Lucy) Clark. I am a descendant of Leafy Clark. (Mrs.) Eva Mead Firestone, Moorcroft, Wyoming.

H. D. Alexandren, Co. A., 109th Engineers in France, please get in touch with Herbert Hess, 920 Second Ave., Iowa City, Iowa.

Bill Herrin, age 22, last heard of in Tallahassee two years ago, anyone knowing his whereabouts please advise his mother, Mrs. Margaret Herrin, 714-10th Avenue So., St. Petersburg, Florida.

John Burke, formerly of Aurora, Illinois, when last heard of was working on the Merchant Marine on the Pacific Coast, is entitled to receive some money from an estate. He should communicate with John A. Dailey, Burlington, Iowa.

(Continued on page 3)

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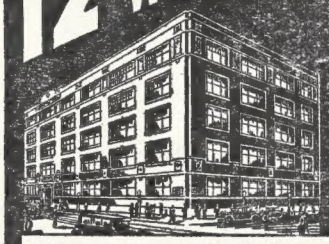

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Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 101, No. 4 for August, 1939 Best of New Stories

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Cover by William Wills
Headings by I. B. Hazelton, Peter Kuhlhoff, and George H. Wert
Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

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Paul (J. P.) McCanless—last heard of in Montana in 1936. Write Clyde in care of W. L. Dalton, Old Fort, N. C. Very important.

Word wanted from George "Tex" Jackson, former cadet at New Mexico Military Institute, who, when last heard from, was in Washington, D. C. Please get in touch with Tony Benedict, 1947 Oak Street, South Pasadena, Calif., and Bill Bucher, 305 Riverside Drive, New York City.

Any man who served with Comp. C, 131st Eng. in spring of 1919 at Le Mons, France, please write Joe Jerabek, 4100 West Cermak Rd., Chicago, Ill. I am the man who was voiceless.

J. M. Kobold, last seen in Sioux City, Iowa, 1924 or 1925. Information wanted by his daughter, Dorothy Kobold, at 1200 West 25th Street, Minneapolis, Minn.

Roy Miller, who served on U. S. S. *Martha Washington* during World War. Word wanted by shipmate Arthur L. Cummings, Lake-Michigan, R. 3, Clare Co.

Louis Meyers, last heard of aboard merchant ship. Write Herbert H. Heater, 879 Baseline, San Bernardino, Cal.

Fred Hull, formerly of Winterest, Iowa, last heard from at Albuquerque, New Mexico, also was ship's carpenter in Pacific waters. Information appreciated by his son, Fred Hull, P. O. Box 17, Covington, Ky.

Peter Barran, last heard of at the Seaman's Home, New York, about eight years ago. Word wanted by his sister, Mrs. Mary A. Ryan, 347 Lookout Ave., Dayton, Ohio.

Word wanted of Robert Taylor, formerly of Seattle, Washington, and now somewhere on the West Coast—5 feet, 9 inches, blond hair and smokes a pipe. Write Alec Hoyer, 990 Geary St. No. 106, San Francisco, Calif.

Wanted: Word from Arnold Wood. Last heard from U. S. M. C. Write "Irish", Box 1925, Juneau, Alaska.

H. K. Van Alen, P. O. Box 96, Champion, Michigan, would like word of John Edward Sylvester Schaeffer More, who left his home in San Diego, Calif., about 13 years ago, saying he was going to the oil fields in Texas.

S. Senster of Cucumber, West Virginia, would like to know the whereabouts of Elmyra Edwards, last heard from at Winston-Salem, N. C.

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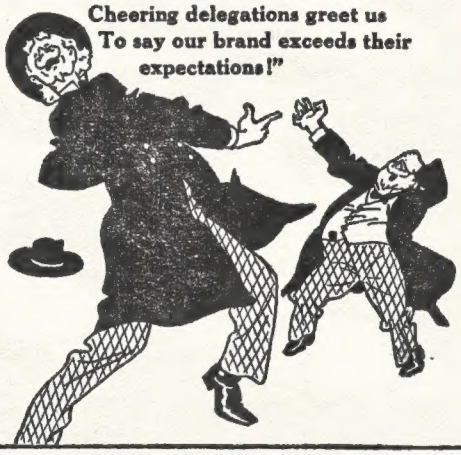

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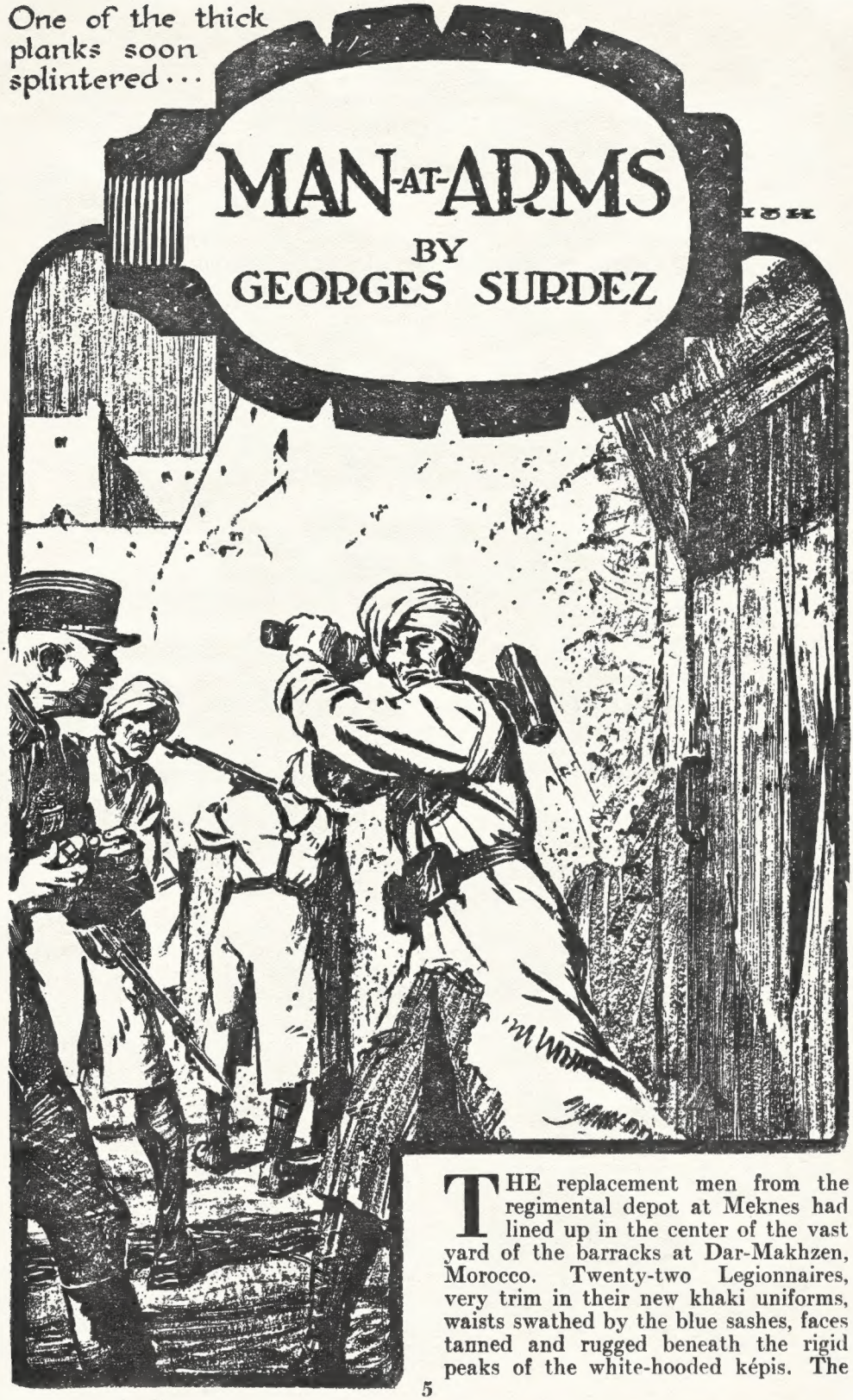
MAN-AT-ARMS

BY

GEORGES SURDEZ



THE replacement men from the regimental depot at Meknes had lined up in the center of the vast yard of the barracks at Dar-Makhzen, Morocco. Twenty-two Legionnaires, very trim in their new khaki uniforms, waists swathed by the blue sashes, faces tanned and rugged beneath the rigid peaks of the white-hooded képis. The

white walls and tiled roofs glittering in the sun against an horizon of mountain crests formed a superb background for this martial display.

But when he recognized Legionnaire Guarnec standing at the right of the line, Sergeant Fremont was overwhelmed by a sense of panic, a superstitious dread.

Three years of separation had not lessened his affection for that man; he still loved him like an older brother. But of late he had come to understand just how much Guarnec had caused his early mistakes in the Foreign Legion, his troubles and trials, his sufferings and humiliation. He loved him, that was true, but he hated the sight of him.

As he spoke the words of welcome, he kept glancing at Guarnec. The Breton had not changed in appearance. He stood there as in the old days, with his great stature, his broad chest, dwarfing the others. The childlike innocence of his face was lighted by eyes that showed like violet petals against the golden tan. No, Guarnec was not a man, he was a handsome, gigantic boy, and would never be anything else, although he must be nearing forty and his life had been hard, bitter.

Nor had his character altered. His peculiar sense of humor must be intact. For the man nearest him seemed furious and uncomfortable, so Fremont knew that Guarnec had played one of his favorite jokes, a sly rap on the ankle with the gun butt— "Oh, sorry, old chap!"— or a handful of gravel poured down the neck. Some few others showed bruised faces, undoubtedly because they had attempted to protest.

"Bentata!" Fremont called the roll." Chévrier, Crackow, Dohr, Guarnec—"

"On deck!" the big fellow shouted.

It was the first time in several years that Fremont heard that reply, that voice. It echoed deeply, stirring forgotten memories. Then Guarnec suddenly cast aside all doubts, showed his solid, white teeth." Eh, there, hello—kid!"

The sergeant sketched a gesture, half a wave and half a salute, because he could not ignore the past altogether. But he could see that the 'kid' had taken immediate effect. No need to worry about a sergeant whom Guarnec knew so well: The men had relaxed, were slipping from his grasp.

"Listen, kid—"

"Silence in the ranks!" Fremont barked.

This was merely a signal for Guarnec to swing into one of his clownish acts. He clasped a hand over his mouth, rolled his eyes, shook in mock terror. Fremont was aware that he was far from an idiot, and knew better. When his comrades were grinning, he lowered his hand, snapped to attention, and called out with exaggerated respect:

"At your orders, Sergeant."

Fremont allowed that to pass, but perspiration oozed down his spine. This was the beginning. As soon as possible, he must have a serious conversation with Guarnec, convince him that for Fremont at any rate, the old, merry days were dead, that dignity must be preserved. He must make him understand somehow that this was a crack march company in Morocco, that he was a sergeant, that they were commanded by Captain Brusson de Kolloch, who did not allow jokes on matters of decorum and discipline.

He called out the last name.

"Who's senior corporal?" he asked.

"I am, Sergeant." A rather short, stocky chap stepped forward, presented arms, very brisk, very earnest. Guarnec greeted his appearance before the line with an incongruous sound made between pursed lips." Corporal Schmaltz, August."

"Corporal Schmaltz, take the detachment across the yard to Building B, ask for the corporal for Room Five. There will be an inspection by the captain at three o'clock. Dismissed."

" 'Shun!" Schmaltz howled." Right shoulder—arms! Right face! Forward—arrrch!"

The Lebel rifles swung up with a single surge; the men moved away as if actuated by metal springs. Everything was military, save Guarnec, who fell out casually as he passed near Fremont. His right hand was stretched out, and although the sergeant knew the power of that paw, he submitted his fingers to the torture of a greeting. A strong aroma of cognac completed the identification. No use wondering where Guarnec had ob-

tained liquor—he would have found it in the middle of the Sahara.

"Glad to see you, squirt!"

"How are you, Guarnec?"

"Swell, kid, couldn't be better." Guarnec swayed a bit, grinned. He spoke with a singing Breton accent, clapping a hand on the noncom's shoulder. "You're most as big as me, and a sergeant!" Say, how about wetting this down?"

"Better keep on with the others," Fremont advised quietly. "We'll get a chance to talk later."

"I get it, I get it!" Guarnec winked. "Yes, Sergeant! Very good, Sergeant! At once, Sergeant!"

And he cavorted away, pretending to trip on his rifle, juggling the weapon. Ten years of Legion, at least two of them with the disciplinary company to learn obedience and respect, had not cured his playfulness!

AFTER the noon meal in the sergeants' mess, Fremont went to the room he shared with two other sergeants. He removed tunic, puttees and boots, stretched on his cot for a siesta. Senior-Sergeant Antonini, buckling on his garrison belt to go on duty, coughed and patted his mustache.

"The captain was watching from the window," he said.

"So what?"

"You know he is strict on that outward marks of respect stuff. If we had Old Man Hirschauer, for instance, it would be all right. He kids with anyone. But de Kolloch is different. That's the Legion for you. Who's the guy—what's he to you?"

"My first pal in the Legion. I was only a kid."

"Must have been. You're not twenty-five yet."

"Name of Guarnec."

"Heard of him. Funny fellow." Antonini brushed the braid of his képi with a sleeve. "I don't know but that's worse than a real tough egg. He got the whole bunch of them into scrapes all the way up, stealing from natives and fighting cops. Three complaints before the major. But that'll be settled easily. De Kolloch doesn't mind that, says he likes his Legionnaires scrappy. So long."

Left alone, Fremont tried to sleep.

But he started to think about the incident in the yard, which de Kolloch had seen. Guarnec had been here less than one hour, and already was causing him uneasiness. How many times in the past had he dragged him into trouble, how many days in prison, in solitary had he won for Fremont? Eight, and sixteen, and thirty, and sixty. That had been something of a joke, in the past, when Fremont had been reckless. But now that he had re-acquired ambition, it was different.

Not that Guarnec would intentionally harm a friend. He was very fond of Fremont. He had risked liberty, health and life for him many times. On one of those massive shoulders was the scar of a knife slash intended for Fremont's throat. But that was Guarnec—he might gamble his life for a pal, but he could not curb his natural spirits for anyone or anything.

"I've got to get a laugh out of this racket," he had told Fremont long ago. "Otherwise, I'd go crazy and start murdering guys right and left. When that Corsican swine rides me, for instance, I've got to clown or I'd rip my bayonet through his guts."

There had been a time when Fremont had shared the same view. When the pompous strut of a conceited drill-sergeant, the stupid phrases of an illiterate officer who believed himself a wit, had driven him to madness. Not more than any other army in the world does the Legion take into account individual intelligence. Rank is the standard; chevrons and stripes mark out intelligence and education for all to see, and in any matter, including spelling and poetry, a corporal knows more than a private, a sergeant knows more than a corporal, and so on all the way up the ladder.

When Fremont had reached Sidi-bel-Abbès, signed up for five years of Legion, he had been barely eighteen, a lanky, nervous, sensitive boy. The world he knew had tumbled about his ears; he considered himself lost. He had enlisted after a fearful scene with his father, because he had failed to pass the examina-

tions to the Military Academy. And had failed not because he lacked intelligence but because he had wasted his time playing about Paris.

"You spent the money I sent you for books on drink and women!" his father had accused. "You, who never have earned a crust of bread. You will always be a bum, a tramp, but never an army officer. That takes guts."

"I may be an army officer, father."

"I don't intend to waste any more money on you. The only way would be to go through the ranks. Let me laugh at that idea. Get out of my sight."

BY the time the father had calmed down, and suggested that another year was possible, Fremont showed him a slip from the army. He had enlisted in the Legion, using an assumed name, an assumed nationality. And all suggestions that the enlistment could be annulled through family friends, that a softer spot could be found for him in a home regiment, had been rejected. Fremont had gone to Algeria, to win his epaulette at the point of the bayonet, against sundry Saharans, Moroccans and Druses.

The life had proved incredibly hard at first. Not because of physical hardships, for a tired man likes any bed and a hungry one any food, but because of a sharp change in contacts and habits. Fremont had mixed with school boys of his own age and class, then with a merry crowd in the Latin quarter. Overnight, he found himself surrounded by grown men, hard-boiled soldiers, many of them uneducated foreigners, chaps who lived like animals. His ways were different, his speech amusing to them.

Within a day, he was the goat for barrack-room jokes. His cot folded up when he got into it; he found his boots filled with gravel in the morning; his pack tumbled when an inspector touched it. And whenever he opened his mouth, a dozen voices would imitate his polished, student's French.

When he had tried to use his fists, a massive German had battered him mercilessly. For it was one thing to fight boys and quite another to cope with a hard-muscled ex-peasant. When he had dropped under those horny fists, the other had kicked him several times, mumbling oaths against "dirty, gabby Frenchmen."

It was then that Guarnec had intervened. Fremont had been aware of him only as one of his tormentors. But Guarnec moved forward.

"Cracks about nations are out," he said.

One enormous hand had clapped about the German's neck, lifting him on his toes, helpless. The other fist, driven with passionless efficiency, had caught the chap under the right ear, knocking him out completely. Then Guarnec had lifted Fremont to his feet, twisted his bleeding nose between casual fingers.

"Stop worrying—it isn't even broken. Come over here and tell me about yourself." To the others, he had announced: "This squirt is my pal from now on. I shall talk to those who don't understand immediately."

Evidently, he could afford to talk that way, for when the German recovered his senses, he did not protest or ask for another chance. Guarnec dominated the room, and even the corporal spoke to him deferently.

"Tell me about yourself," he said, and Fremont gave him an account of his past. Guarnec nodded.

"Rich, that's your trouble. Can't blame the guys—you high-hatted them. You're only a squirt and you had to be taught your place. You don't know anything about anything, do you? Bet you've never been drunk, eh?"

"No, sir," Fremont said mechanically.

"What kind of talk is that? There are no sirs in the Legion. Just a lot of guys who can't be anything else but butcher's meat for the government. There's only two things a Legionnaire has left to do—live and die. He must do plenty of the first to forget about the other until it comes around. You don't want to be an officer, kid. You want to be a man, a Legionnaire. You'll have more fun. I'll teach you the ropes."

Guarnec was sincere, but he proved a queer teacher, from all accepted standards. He taught Fremont to overcome his distaste for alcohol and tobacco. A

man got drunk and smoked. He taught him that too great discrimination in the selection of feminine companionship was poor policy and led to suffering, heartbreak.

"They don't count, they're nothing. You're the boss, see? If you talk mush to them and write them love letters, they ask you for dough. But if you slap them around and they see you don't care much, they give you their dough. See?"

Fremont, who was a bachelor of letters, had read much the same things in the philosophers. In his own way, Guarnec was a Montaigne. And he was a sort of king, a chieftain, among his kind, although he did not even wear the single chevron of first-class Legionnaire. Fremont admired him, believed him.

In three months, no one would have recognized him. His vocabulary had been pruned in one way, enlarged immensely in another. He smoked a big pipe and was not awed by two or three quarts of wine in a single evening. His youth and his handsome, dark face made him popular in the night establishments, and he took cruel advantage of that. Moreover, under Guarnec's tuition, he had learned to fight swiftly, in unorthodox, efficient fashion.

"A kick in the shin and then give 'em the knee, kid. I don't have to do that because I'm big. But remember, when you see there's going to be a fight, strike first. When you fight, fight every time as if your life depended on winning. Suppose a guy comes at you this way—you know he's going to kick, so—here, stand up and let me show you—"

There were many chances to practice, in a garrison town. Very soon, even among officers, Fremont had the reputation of a vicious, hard-drinking, rebellious young brute. But Guarnec was proud of him.

"I'll take you on a serious job soon," he promised.

The chance had come when a local gendarme had beaten a drunken Legionnaire. The affair aroused much indignation among the troopers, and wise authorities decided to keep them in barracks until the other was transferred. But Guarnec, Fremont and another man, with the complicity of their mates in the dormitory and the tacit complicity of the sergeants on duty, went over the wall after roll-call one night. They located the guilty man just as he was returning home from a farewell visit to a café. The punishment was silent, efficient. The victim was to remain three months in the hospital.

Back in barracks, sure of safety, Fremont quivered and gagged as he recalled the brutal performance. He pressed his palms over his ears to muffle the thud of fists and boots on human flesh.

"Had to be done," Guarnec consoled him. "See, if they ever get away with beating up a Legionnaire like that, they'll always gang up on one of us who happens to be alone and drunk. This way, they'll arrest him, but stay polite. Cops are lice, anyway. I wish that one would croak." Legionnaire Guarnec had an intense hatred of detectives, policemen, gendarmes and all that ilk.

Fremont had known such men as courteous chaps in uniforms with brass buttons, who kept away burglars and came around on the first of the year to get their presents from his people, like the postman and the servants. Guarnec knew them from another angle, and had ghastly stories to tell of their brutality, injustice, abuse of power and extreme cowardice.

IN imitation still, Fremont became a cop-hater. His first serious trouble came from assaulting a gendarme. Thirty days in a cell. But he did not mind the price when he came out and saw that his reputation was good among his friends. His early ambition to rocket through the ranks, to go home as an officer, had vanished. He would be a Legionnaire's Legionnaire, asking nothing of life except fighting, booze and a good time. Like Guarnec, his idol.

"Why are you here, anyway, Guarnec?" he asked once.

That had puzzled him often, for Guarnec was a Breton, hence a seaman. He had sailed about the world as a boy, had served in the Republic's fleet, knew most of the ports of the world. He was often lonely for the sea. Yet he was a

pack-toting, foot-slogging Legionnaire!

"Cops," Guarnec said shortly.

"What for?"

"For nothing at first. Then plenty later."

"Tell me—"

But Guarnec, that time, had grown angry, shoved him away. It was months after, in the small hours after a long drunken spree, that he talked about himself. It was on the sloping plank serving as bed in a military cell, naturally. The morning after pay-day ordinarily fought Guarnec and Fremont there, with wool-covered palates, aching heads and the prospect of a week of special fatigue.

"They did me dirt, kid. They did—"

"Who did?"

"The cops, officers, the whole lot. I'm not bad. I wasn't asking for any trouble. I'm a Breton, and I never went to school much. Cabin-boy at ten. Grand Banks, Newfoundland. Then on a four-masted steel bark, Australia, China, Japan, South-America. Then I was on a trawler, regular navy, during the war. Channel, Mediterranean, Greek sea, that was war time. Then they put me on a battleship. Gunner. I liked it. One day, we're in Brest, and my home village is only an hour away. I'm sent with a message somewhere by my captain. I think I'll sneak a visit home—had a girl there, Breton style. Well, one of the cops was sweet on her, and he spots me. So he arrests me, asks me for my leave. It was not his business, see? He was civilian police.

"They hold me over and inform my ship. I would have got back in plenty of time. But they held me over, and it was two days illegal absence. Fifteen days in the brig. Spoils my record—my chief doesn't trust me anymore. So when I get leave, I go home and pick a fight with the cop. It was man to man, and he was willing. But after I had licked him, it was assaulting a cop!

"They gave me six months, and then I was sent to Discipline. At Toulon, Navy barracks. What's the use of telling more—once they get you they get you. I was there two years, for talking back, for doing this or that. Nothing to it, just guards playing around. Then I was sent to the pen in Africa for socking one of them who thought he was in the old navy. Yeah, there's that kind, too. But he didn't give that explanation, you can bet.

"I manage to behave. I come out, and I hear my girl has married that cop, that they have a couple of kids. I don't dare go home, or chance being too near, not the way I feel. So I enlist in the Legion. Everything swell—I'm a corporal in six months. But a new sub-lieutenant comes, egg who used to be a keeper in the prison camp. I'm demoted in a month.

"So what's the use? I tried to tell my captain, who had been a good friend. But he froze up on me, very polite: 'My dear fellow, I cannot listen to gossip about a colleague.' They all hang together, cops, officers."

And Fremont had listened, sympathized. He himself had felt the dividing line between constituted authority and ordinary men.

THEN another revelation had come. His company had been sent to the Sahara to participate in a punitive column. The Legionnaires who had been toughest in barracks, those who had occupied prison cells most of the time, proved among the best fighters. Perhaps because they wanted to show that there was one place where they ranked high—the firing line. And those men were cajoled and praised by the same officers who had repressed them harshly up north.

Guarnec, the bane of noncoms in garrison existence, became the darling of the outfit. He was tireless, an inspiration to others. He could fight with gun and bayonet almost as well as with his hands and feet. His murderous fury at the climax of a bayonet charge was not easily forgotten—men bowling about before the flying butt, the long steel blade darting and stabbing like the bill of some frightful bird.

"Come on, kid," he panted over his shoulder to Fremont. "Come on, let's get them!"

And Fremont, his tremors of fear wiped out by the other's confidence, obeyed, came on—and matched the performance. When the company, deci-

mated, ragged, proud, marched back into a civilized center behind blaring bugles and thumping drums, Guarnec was slated for corporal, proposed for the Military Medal. Fremont was due to receive the lone chevron of first-class Legionnaire, and, as he had a citation, the Colonial Cross.

A young lieutenant who had spoken to Fremont often, called him aside on the night of the return. "Fremont, you appear to have a good education."

"Bachelor of letters, Lieutenant."

"I'm putting you on the corporals' training squad and putting in an applica- to Saint-Maixent School for you."

He evidently expected thanks. Fremont's face set hard.

"No, thank you, Lieutenant."

"Why not?"

"Doesn't interest me," Fremont spoke steadily, deliberately. He felt very big, very clever as he rebuffed that young chief, enjoyed the look of angry sorrow on his face, smashed his words home. "I wouldn't wish to have a commission. I'm happy among my friends, Legionnaires, real men."

"You're making a bad mistake, Fremont."

"That must be a habit, Lieutenant. I must have made mistakes or I would not be here in the first place. May I be excused, Lieutenant? I have an appointment with a few of my comrades to get drunk."

The young officer had nodded, taken a wallet from his tunic, presented ten francs at his fingers' tip. Fremont knew that this was a test. So he accepted the ten francs, thanked the lieutenant calmly, saluted and left.

And he, his friends, had taken the reserved quarter apart that night. There had been the sounds of bottles smashing mirrors, of squealing women and fighting men. Blood flowed, the patrols circulated through the narrow streets like life-boats in a stormy sea, battered and helpless. Fremont had emerged with one eye the hue of a ripe fig, a knife cut in his side. The same order of the day that was to have made his and Guarnec's promotions public, announced their shame—thirty days of prison, fifteen of them solitary cell.

Another year, a third had passed, with Guarnec and Fremont inseparable, two against the world. They campaigned in the Middle Atlas together, around Rish and Gourama and Midelt.

Still side by side, they were sent back to Sidi-bel-Abbès for a rest period with the First Regiment. Together, they faked illness well enough to be sent to the hospital in Oran, which appealed to them because it was a large city where Legionnaires given afternoon liberty enjoyed much freedom from supervision. And it was there that Guarnec recognized on the street the man who had been a guard in the prison camp, then assigned as a sub-lieutenant in the Legion. One of his many foes among 'cops and their sort'.

The fellow was in civilian clothes, and they learned that he had left the service to get married. He was manager of a barrel factory.

"My meat," Guarnec said. "Kid, you keep out of this."

"What do you take me for?" Fremont retorted.

The poor chap had preserved certain army habits, and they located him easily, one evening, in an establishment where a respectable business man had no reason to be. Guarnec took him in charge, while Fremont, armed with a heavy wooden stool, kept others from interfering. The big Breton literally juggled with his prey, beat him badly, but did not injure him—that is, broke only his jaw. All would have been well; the man would have kept quiet to avoid a scandal.

But somebody had summoned the patrol, and there was another fight. There were seven *Tirailleurs* in that patrol, and two city cops joined them before the end. But there were ten or twelve Legionnaires in various places along the same street. Theirs not to reason why—when native infantrymen and police are manhandling Legionnaires, a Legionnaire's strict duty is plain.

As street rows go, that was a pretty one. Despite the fact that all these Legionnaires, being in Oran, were either listed as sick or convalescent, the patrol was defeated. As for the cops, one went to the hospital, and the other was found

later hiding in a rain barrel—at about the time when Guarnec and Fremont, back in the fever ward at the Hospital, were trying to deny their participation in the mêlée, despite bruises and cuts.

This time, the newspaper mentioned names, recorded the fray. Oran is a modern city. And Fremont saw in the audience, at the trial, his father, garbed in black, with the tiny ribbons of the decorations he had earned as a battalion commander in the World War ornamenting his lapel. Guarnec drew down a year, while Fremont, justly or not, was given the routine punishment: sixty days, thirty of them solitary cell.

"So long, kid," Guarnec said. "You got off easy. We'll meet again. And don't let anybody fool you. You're a regular guy."

Fremont had felt very bad at the separation. Why not? Guarnec was his pal. In the short space of three years, had he not changed Fremont from a soft, silly youth to a strong, tough man? Were there many lads of twenty-one who commanded as much respect from his comrades as he did? Respect based on his personality, not on chevrons.

BEFORE being taken to prison, Fremont had been led into a sunlit room, where his father was waiting for him. The old man had not offered his hand.

"Your mother read about you in the papers—undoubtedly, despite my wishes, she had corresponded with you, as she knew your Legion name. She fell sick, and to quiet her I promised to come down here and help you. I've lied to her; I did nothing."

"I expected no less from you, father."

"You are right." The old man nodded wearily. "You are my son. My own desire was to employ what meager influence I have to help you. But I have been in the army myself, although you seem to forget it. I did not wish to offend you, to humiliate you before your comrades. I understood you had to take it as you had given it, on your own."

Fremont was startled. His father understood something of what he felt! Yes, he would have been ashamed had his father made efforts to distinguish him from the others. Being touched, he resorted to sarcasm to hide it.

"Well, I have earned my bread for three years. If you consult my record, you will see that I did my job well. I could have decorations, too, had I fallen for that bunk."

"I shall tell your mother that you are in good health," the father said. "You're finding yourself bit by bit. You have physical courage. Moral courage will come later. Good-by."

They shook hands.

And Fremont went to prison. Dimly, he felt that he had lost out in the interview with his father. There had been no reproaches, even when he had mentioned earning his own living, for the postal money orders he had obtained from his mother. For among his pals, it was not dishonorable to write a 'chiseling' letter home to obtain funds for an extra spree. Even Guarnec had a sister from whom he got money at long intervals.

Moral courage would come later? What had his father meant?

AFTER serving his short term, he was transferred to Morocco, in another regiment. It chanced that none of his old comrades were in his battalion. And, although he had believed himself famous, he found that the sergeant accepted him as an ordinary Legionnaire and paid no attention to his parading of independence. If Guarnec had been with him, he might have attempted to rival the local clowns and toughs, but the separation from his big friend seemed to have taken some of the spirit out of him.

A skirmish in the hills while on patrol won him a citation, and brought him to the attention of Captain Kolloch. Brusson de Kolloch was an odd character, brave as a sword, aloof, with a rasping, sarcastic tongue. He was reputed to be a snob because of some title or other and a large private fortune. But he showed guts and leadership under fire, and, in the final analysis, that was all the Legion wanted of him.

"Making you sergeant," he said. "Colonel approved already." Fremont attempted to go into his act, refusing

ironically. De Kolloch eyed him coldly. "If you don't like the honor, you'll like the pay. Don't be a damned fool. You accept promotion or take three months prison. Impudence to superior. Have no time for foolishness, clowning. Dismissed."

Fremont, caught short, had obeyed. After eight months as sergeant, he suddenly grew ambitious. After all, he had almost completed the course for school, once, and he did enjoy the comparative freedom of a noncom's life. Perhaps it would be all right to have a commission.

There was small doubt, until today, that de Kolloch would back him for an appointment to Saint-Maixent School. But with Guarnec present, there would be some trouble. There was the one man who could prove a stumbling block!

"If it's trouble you want, you'll be served—"

SERGEANT IKMANN, a youngish German, entered the room, hung up his képi and unbuckled his belt. "Say, I'm glad to be here, Fremont! Some butterfingered slob dropped a hand grenade in practice and one of the splinters went this far from my nose—" he indicated with thumb and finger. "And, by the way, the old man wants to see you."

"Tell him I'm out," Fremont said. But he swung his feet to the floor and reached for his boots. "What does he want?"

"You know him. Talkative, eh? He *would* tell *me* the details."

Fremont halted before the mirror, adjusted the angle of his képi, as carefully as a young girl starting off on a date. Details had their importance with de Kolloch. A smartly turned-out sergeant softened his heart.

The sun was hot, but a cool wind blew down from the mountains. He looked at the crests: Within three weeks, a month at the most, his battalion would be out there somewhere, campaigning. For the snow was melting, and military operations would resume.

De Kolloch was waiting for him, behind the table he occupied in the company's office. He was a broad-shouldered, saturnine officer in the late thirties, with a hard, square face framed by a brush of stiff brown hair. The chin, the set of the mouth, gave him a resemblance to a famous general. It was said that de Kolloch did nothing to lessen that resemblance.

He nodded in greeting as Fremont came to attention.

"Well, Sergeant, what do you think of the new draft?"

"They look very good, *mon capitaine.*" Fremont was worried, for when the captain used many words, he was putting a man off-guard. "Forty percent are reenlisted men with previous service in Morocco. Two military medals in the lot."

"Very surprising," de Kolloch remarked. "As a general rule, the regimental base appears to consider my company a refuge for cripples, malingerers and incorrigibles. I saw them from the window. They march well, very well. And, Sergeant—" The voice grew confidential, gentle— "You have nothing else to report?"

"I don't believe so." Fremont corrected himself, for the captain detested such answers. "No, Captain."

"Too bad," the officer said softly. Then his words came like machine-gun bullets. "Witnessed tender scene in yard. Know my principles familiarity noncoms and privates. Disgraceful. Poison to discipline."

"I could not refuse to shake hands, Captain. The Legionnaire is an old friend, and—"

"Might be brother, father. Don't give damn. He is private, you sergeant. No justification public effusion. Actually put hands on you. Bad for prestige, Sergeant. Have your application appointment school commission. Expect me approve if behave thus?"

De Kolloch was going splendidly in his telegraphic style.

"I didn't realize, Captain, that—"

"Should realize. Should have given two days prison. Motive undue familiarity. You did not give. So I confine you quarters two days. If chevrons interfere social activities shall be happy remove them. Understood?"

"Yes, Captain."

"Shall watch you. First favor shown man, zip! This not Friendly Society—March Company, Foreign Legion. Remember."

"Yes, Captain."

"Looked up record. Man not bad. Breton, like me. Hard-headed. Show you how talk to him. Come along." De Kolloch rose, and Fremont experienced the same sense of surprise as always. The captain had a short torso and legs like a stork. He turned from an undersized man into a tall one in the mere act of rising.

The new men were ready for inspection. De Kolloch made them a little speech, which Fremont doubted they could decode. It took some time to supply connectives between words automatically. But they stood there, sweating and willing to listen. The captain repeated each name. One of his principles was that a man should feel he was known as an individual, so as not to resent being treated like a machine.

"Guarnec? Breton? Am Breton myself. First names?"

"Yves-Marie-Joseph, Captain."

"Real Breton. Man-at-arms, eh? Tradition, patriotism, religion-stubborn—loyal—Bretons, eh?"

Fearfully, Fremont saw the old look of bland innocence spread over Guarnec's face. The Legionnaire was about to make a comeback. He tried to catch his eye, to shake his head.

"Yes, Captain. Brittany has the highest percentage of illiterates and cretins in the French Republic." And nothing could depict the hypocritical expression of intense pride in Guarnec's eyes.

For an instant, Fremont really pitied de Kolloch, rendered speechless by the retort. The captain had started the conversation, could not very well blame Guarnec for answering. The men who had overheard stared into space with vacant eyes and set lips. But there was a suspicious quivering of the rifle tips, as the throbbing of constrained laughter pulsed through their tight-clenched hands.

De Kolloch opened his mouth, shut it.

He walked on, and Fremont, striding four paces behind him, could see his ears glow redly. The officer made short work of the rest of routine inspection, declared himself pleased. He did not look at Guarnec again.

In the office, he sat down to consult the documents concerning the replacement men. He lingered over the report on Legionnaire Guarnec, Yves-Marie-Joseph, for several minutes.

"That acquaintance of yours, Sergeant, communist?"

"I never heard of his belonging to any political party, Captain. As a matter of fact, I don't believe he ever voted, for he has been in service since before his majority."

"Subversive speech. Must be watched."

"Yes, Captain."

"Not asking you. Dismissed."

Fremont had to confess that some years before he would have applauded Guarnec's answer, his 'putting a fast one over' on the old man.

Even now, he admitted that there was no one like his old friend for starting off in a new place with a loud bang. On the very day of his arrival, he had won actual fame.

The whole company knew him as 'The Breton Man-At-Arms', and the cooks were spreading the nickname throughout the battalion. And it was only the first day!

Two days' confinement for Fremont, and a feud with the captain: That was not such slow work.

CHAPTER II

YESTERDAY'S COMRADE

THE inevitable interview proved stormy. When Guarnec entered the rear room of a café to keep the appointment made by Fremont, he was evidently furious. He ignored the hand offered him, straddled a chair. He shoved the képi to the back of his skull, unfastened the top buttons of his tunic in a well-remembered gesture. He looked his years, seen so near, and through his boyishness the sergeant could sense an unspoken weariness.

"That's the way it'll be, eh?" he asked heavily.

"What?"

"Three days I've been around. You told your orderly to keep me away. Then I have to sneak to come in here and talk to you. I don't know why I even came."

Fremont poured cognac into thick tumblers. He had sent away the special glasses brought him by the owner, aware that they would irritate his friend as another affectation of refinement. He laid the package of cigarettes on the table.

"I was punished, confined to quarters. The orderly explained that. I couldn't have visitors. As for meeting you in the front room here, it's full of people, soldiers, sergeants, and everything is reported. I can't be seen drinking with privates; you know that as well as I do."

"I have had drinks with officers in public."

"I'm not an officer."

"You intend to be," Guarnec sneered. "You'll kill your mother for it; you'd step on your old friends. Come on, tell the truth: You wish I was any place but here. It was all so nice, being the handsome sergeant with nothing in common with disgusting, low-down Legionnaires!"

Fremont grew angry, his face flushed. He felt sorry for Guarnec, understood his attitude, but felt that it would be wrong to yield the point. After all, there was nothing to be ashamed of in wearing chevrons, and he was done with stupid behavior that ended in wasted years.

"Sure, I got worried when I saw you, Guarnec. Why not?" He tried to joke: "You make everything so simple and quiet for all of us. Like climbing right on de Kolloch's neck, first thing. Now, what was the sense of that performance?"

"You ask me that?"

"Sure. I'm not asking you why you did it. I'm asking what was the sense."

"Well, well!" Guarnec rested his big hands on his knees and stared at Fremont in mock amazement. "See who is talking! I'll be damned! Listen, when a guy comes at me with that 'my fellow Breton' stuff, like he was going to a mean dog with a bone, I know what follows. Feudal business, you know, man-at-arms, and it's supposed to be flattering. I was supposed to think, 'Why, this handsome and rich officer admits he is just a man like me. How decent of him.' You know what the next thing would have been if I had acted pleased?"

"No."

"I've had that Breton approach before. He'd have asked me to be his orderly. They always do. Noble Breton in the castle, Breton serf watching the gate. Classy stuff, like a book: 'Master and man for generations'." Guarnec tossed off his glass, refilled it from the bottle casually. "I lost all taste for licking boots years ago."

"Admitting you may have been right," Fremont conceded, "what about me?"

"What about you, yes?" Guarnec spoke slowly.

"You understand how I'm fixed?"

"You have a soft snap and you want to keep it. You don't need me—you don't want to be bothered with me. You're a gentleman, or, being a mere sergeant, an apprentice-gentleman."

"I get good money and easier living." Fremont spoke angrily. "I'm not blaming you, but I wasted enough years showing off, butting my head against stone walls to prove it was hard. Anyway, we wouldn't be together if I lost my chevrons; I'd be transferred at once. I am your friend, and I can help you along, as in the old days. I happen to be lucky, to have the more money—"

Guarnec's eyes flashed.

"Sure. So we'll add my pay and yours and split it down the middle, fifty-fifty, as before." His teeth showed in a snarling laugh. "I don't think you like that idea, do you? It's impossible, isn't it? You're willing to throw me ten francs now and then. And, when I'm drunk, I'd be slob enough to take them. Now, let me tell you, if you ever lend me any dough I ask for when drunk, as soon as I am sober, I'll break your neck."

Fremont stiffened.

"I'm not afraid of you, Guarnec."

"No, and who have you got to thank for being a man that's not afraid? Me, and don't you forget it."

"Yes, Yves. Listen—"

"I know. You're sorry, but what can you do about it? Life is that way. It isn't convenient for us to be friends. I don't blame you. We never belonged together, I should have known that."

"Don't be sore at me, old man."

"Sore at you?" Guarnec smiled scornfully. "You know what I'd be doing if I was sore. This will pay for those drinks I had. You can't be supplying Legionnaires with drink." The big man aligned several bronze coins and a grimy bill on the table. "Well, so long. It was nice to meet an old pal."

He rose and buttoned his tunic, straightened his képi.

"Just a minute—where are you going?"

"Back to my own kind, kid. Back with guzzling, dirty-mouthed second-class Legionnaires. Now, shut up, and let me pass—"

"I've told you I was not afraid of you."

"You're no longer afraid of a beating," Guarnec shrugged. "But you're afraid of what I am, afraid of what's left in you that's like me. Afraid that you'll remember what it's like to be a man, to talk back to some snob like de Kolloch. But don't worry—that's dead in you. You're through. For the rest of your natural life, whether sergeant or general, you'll obey and shut up—for stripes, for medals, for money."

"I want a future—"

"Sure. And inside six months, you may be lying out somewhere, kicking off, thirsty and wondering why you didn't drink and have a good time. You're just a punk—" The big man caught Fremont's right arm and held him still. "Don't worry, I won't hurt you in your job if you leave me alone. I give you the right to live as you like, but don't undertake to reform *me*."

He reached out and flung the door open. He came to attention, saluted and said loudly, crisply: "Thank you very much, Sergeant! Good night, Sergeant!"

Fremont pushed his way through the crowd around the bar. He was almost weeping. Yet there was nothing he could say, less that he could do. Cold reason told him that he was following the right course. But to have this scene, with Guarnec!

He knew the man better than he knew himself. More than once, when his spirit broke in the torment of a sobering spell, Guarnec had cried before him, head between his hands, sobbed and called himself a fool and a madman. And, when he, Fremont, had had such spells, Guarnec had patted him, consoled him, made plans. They would pull out of the Legion, buy a small boat, and fish; they would get a farm in Morocco; they—

A friendship like that—and that was all it came to? He felt very old, very tired.

An almost overwhelming temptation came to him, from his old self: To go, chevrons and all, and slide between Guarnec and somebody else at one of the tables, to reach for the bottle, saying loudly: "These chevrons must be off before noon. Let's have some fun."

That would be something to be remembered!

HE entered the barracks, walked toward his quarters. Crossing the yard, he met a group of men, Captain de Kolloch, who wore slacks and a vizorless cap, the veterinarian, Sergeant Antonini and the muleteers' corporal. He saluted and was about to pass when the captain stopped him:

"There you are, Sergeant! Wondering where you were. Too late now."

"I have liberty until one, Captain," Fremont retorted, with a glance at his wrist-watch. "It is not quite nine-thirty."

"Yes, yes. But Carabine had the colic."

Carabine was the oldest and nastiest mule in the ammunition echelon, an enormous, bony beast, with the temperament of an operatic tenor and the delicate health of a wealthy maiden aunt. Somehow, everybody appeared to think she was of importance to the company. They had even disturbed the captain!

"Am I suspected of contributing to her ailment, Captain?"

"What? Nonsense, nonsense. But you have a way with her, Sergeant." The officer meant to be pleasant. "Merely wishing you were here help us. Had most difficult time."

"She is quite well, I hope, Captain?"

"Yes, yes."

"I shall express my congratulations to her as soon as possible."

There was a pause. By the light of the lantern, Fremont saw that Antonini was shaking his head, and the veterinarian, a stout, easy-going sub-lieutenant, was trying not to grin. De Kolloch's voice had changed.

"My friend, are you trying to be humorous?"

"Not in the least, Captain."

The officer peered into his face for an instant, then swung aside and walked away. Fremont was furious with himself. That was the influence that Guarnec had over him. Why had he said that? To what purpose? De Kolloch would believe him drunk, which was bad, or sober and impudent, which was much worse.

Certainly, the captain would be in no mood to approve his application for a special course in France. He might pay for this humorous remark with a delay of six months!

INSIDE two weeks, Guarnec had created a band of reckless characters, as he always did wherever he went. For the first time, Fremont was on the other side of the fence and knew the impotent, furious rage of non-coms faced by systematic, deliberate misinterpretations of orders, with the men keeping just within the limits of discipline. Ikmann, the young German sergeant, for instance, would collapse on his cot when he returned from drill.

"The swine, the dirty slobs, the stubborn pigs."

He was bayonet instructor, and when he put a detachment through the routine drill, they had at heart to demonstrate that he did not know what he was teaching. They would do everything wrong, and when he called one of them out to demonstrate just where the flaw was, the fellow would suddenly become agile, clever, and make a fool of the teacher.

"That big lout of yours," he told Fremont, "he managed to make me lunge, tripped me as if by accident, and I went on my face. And when we resumed, he went on *his* face, as I had. Lieutenant Hallez was watching us, and he laughed. All right, but suppose it had been de Kolloch?"

"Get him for something else," Fremont suggested.

He knew that, according to the code prevailing in Guarnec's set, that was legitimate. The next time Guarnec, neatly turned out, tried to leave barracks for town after soup, Ikmann, on duty at the gateway, stopped him, scanned him from head to foot.

"Not properly dressed. Turn about."

A noncom does not have to indicate what part of dress is out of order. Guarnec turned about as instructed, returned in ten minutes. And was sent back. At eight-twenty, when it was too late to start for town—ordinary liberty ended at nine—Ikmann indicated his excuse: The tip of a boot-lace showing below the puttee, in back.

Guarnec did not protest. Technically, the sergeant was within his rights. But,

although he returned at nine with the others, from that day on, no one saw him pass out of barracks through the gate. He was climbing the wall somewhere, no one could discover just where. And when his liberty was curtailed for one reason or another, he went to town nevertheless, returning the way he had left, mysteriously. He was something of a personality in town, and it was known that the local cops, two in number, avoided the establishments he frequented.

For a long time, three weeks or more, Fremont had little to do with his former friend. He had spoken a few words to Lieutenant Hallez, who was friendly, and Guarnec had been assigned to another section.

"I know how it is," the lieutenant said. "When I was in a French regiment, the son of my father's boss came as a recruit. It's all very well to say that no personal considerations enter. When they do, it's annoying."

Then Fremont was on patrol duty in town for an evening, doing major police work. The local police could not be expected to handle the two to three hundred Legionnaires who poured into the segregated streets from five-thirty to eight-thirty. After lights-out had sounded, the job grew a bit easier, as most of the men had left. It was after ten when the patrol was called upon to quiet a dispute in number sixteen, kept by Lard-Tub, an obese Spanish woman.

As soon as Fremont appeared in the doorway, the chin-strap of his képi under his chin to show he was on duty, the quarrel ended. There were four Legionnaires in the center of the floor, three armed with chair legs, the fourth, Guarnec, unarmed.

Hugging the walls were a half-dozen privates of the Colonial Artillery, also equipped with improvised clubs and bottles. The girls were huddled behind the bar. All movement, all sound were suspended, save for the barking of a mastiff chained at one end of the counter.

"What's up?" Fremont challenged.

"It's Legion night, as you know, Sergeant," one of the Legionnaires replied. "And these guys came in and tried to take over—"

"Sergeant—" One of the artillerymen, a tough young Frenchman who wiped a cut on his forehead, came forward. "We have midnight leave, special. We didn't come here until after ten, when all Legionnaires should be gone. You see, we were just back from outside duty, and our captain—"

"Never mind that," Fremont cut him short. "Have you Legionnaires midnight passes? Show them to me." He stood by the door, taking the passes one after the other. Three were valid. The fourth was not: Guarnec had handed him a yellow slip outwardly resembling a pass, but bearing advertising matter for some toilet article. Fremont returned the papers. "In order. Now—" he addressed the owners—"you must choose. Either the Legionnaires go, or the artillery. We don't want more fighting."

The answer was not in doubt: There was a battalion of Legion in town and but a section of artillery. Morever, in some manner, Legionnaires always had money. Furious, cursing, rebellious, the artillerymen filed out, to seek their luck elsewhere.

"See that you're back by midnight," Fremont advised the Legionnaires.

When he was leading his patrols through the streets again, he laughed at Guarnec's presence of mind. How quickly the fellow had produced something that looked like a document, knowing that all any noncom would wish was an excuse to put the others in the wrong.

His strict duty was to arrest Guarnec. But he could not do it in such a trifling case. For arrest would have meant serious charges against his former friend: Absence without leave, nocturnal disturbance in a public spot, blows and cuts inflicted on soldiers of another corps duly provided with passes. Captain de Kolloch, who had no reason to like Guarnec, would have given him fifteen days' cell, which the major would have jacked up to thirty, as a matter of routine, and the local commander would have doubled—to sixty.

HE felt no remorse for having stretched such a slight point. But the following morning, he was summoned to battalion headquarters. The major, a tall, reedy

man, was there, with de Kolloch and the Alsatian captain, Old Man Hirschauer, who commanded the machine-gun unit. Fremont remembered that two of the four men involved in the row the night before had been from the machine-gunners.

"We sent for you to clear up a point, Sergeant," the major said. "Legionnaire Guarnec was arrested at two in the morning, trying to scale the wall near the bakers' oven."

Fremont felt a sensation of intense cold in the pit of his stomach. His slip from duty was discovered. But nothing showed on his face. Guarnec taught his pupils to fight things out.

"Yes, Major?"

"Guarnec tried to tell the patrol sergeant that he had lost a pass, giving him liberty until two. Having lost it, he was unwilling to pass through the gate. At that time, he cited your name, said you had seen the pass. Three witnesses confirm this. Now—"

Fremont was about to speak, when Hirschauer, seated a little behind and to the left of the major, winked quietly, shook his head, then seemed interested in something out of the window.

"Now, Guarnec denies having shown you his pass, claims that he handed you back one of the passes you had already returned, slipped to him by one of his comrades. What I am seeking to find out, Sergeant, is if the pass was genuine. I personally counter-sign all late liberty passes. I have reason to believe some of those passes are sold, by the men to whom issued, to others. Did you read off the names and ask each man to answer?"

"No, Major."

"And naturally, you paid no attention to the names on the passes, so that the switch was possible." The major turned to the captains: "That proves what I was saying, gentlemen. Patrol noncoms should be instructed specially in such points. Thank you, Sergeant—you may leave. No blame to you on this occasion, but particular instructions will be issued."

Fremont left, almost reeling with relief. But one thing emerged from the incident: Guarnec had been willing to go to prison rather than expose him. He had denied that he had presented to the sergeant a patent forgery. For a moment, he had held Fremont's career in his hands. It was comforting to know this.

He had not gone far before a hail halted him. The two captains were behind him. He retraced his steps, saluted. He saw Hirschauer nudge de Kolloch warningly, and the square-jawed officer glowered but kept still.

"Sergeant," the old captain spoke gruffly," I hope you understand that you fooled no one. You covered for Guarnec. I hear you know the man well, so you would have noticed his name. You understand why the major went through this little comedy.

"Now, I have toted a knapsack myself, before you were born. So you can believe that I understand. I have persuaded your captain to be lenient a first time. That's all."

"Thank you, Captain."

GUARNEC was out of circulation for eight days, doing special drill with the punished squad behind the prison. Captain de Kolloch, although he had taken Hirschauer's advice, continued to treat Fremont like a leper. If the sergeant's chances for promotion depended on him, as they did somewhat, they were growing very slim.

Fremont wondered for a while just why de Kolloch had allowed the older officer to dictate.

Then it came out that Hirschauer was to take the battalion over for the coming campaign, as acting-major. And he realized that the captain, for all his stiff-necked ways, was something of a diplomat.

Guarnec, to celebrate his freedom, returned to barracks drunk. All would have been well ordinarily, but a new corporal was at the gate, a young Belgian, very conscious of his dignity. When the drunken Legionnaire called him a stuffed monkey he ordered him taken to the lockup. Fremont was in charge that evening, and the Breton grew maudlin, cajoling—then, as inevitable, insulting.

Before the men of the guard, who were laughing openly, he could not keep silent. "Two days' cell."

The report went before the captain, who swelled up the two days to fifteen, the maximum in his power—and a harsher punishment than may be meted out by a subaltern officer in other regiments. The captain in turn reported to the major: Fifteen more days. Guarnec was spotted and being watched all up the line.

Fremont had not worried: He believed that the battalion would take the field soon, and all punishments would be forgotten. But the opening of the campaign was delayed, partly by the heavy rains, partly because of diplomatic considerations, and Guarnec served a full month. For which, naturally, he blamed Fremont. In fact, the sergeant had given the original impulse.

Two days after his release, Guarnec was on sentry duty before the supply-sheds. As Fremont passed nearby, he stepped forward to bar his passage, presented arms, then stood at attention.

"I want to talk to you, Fremont."

"Later."

"Right now. If you try to duck me, I'll smack you over the head with the butt. Believe me? Good." Guarnec took breath. "You did me a favor that night in the dump. I tried to do you another when they pinched me on the way back. All right. Fifty-fifty. Old pals, you know. But what you did when I was drunk, I'll never forget, never. You know I didn't mean any harm. I was friendly—"

"You were drunk."

"That's what I've been telling you. And you took advantage of it to pin a month on me. You must have made out a dirty report for that guy to slap me so hard. You're trying to get me away to disciplinary company. All right, I'll go. I'll even go to the pen. But it's going to be for something real, you bet."

"Yves, you—"

"Shut up. Keep out of my way when I have a couple of glasses in me, or you'll be sorry. I can keep from retching when I see you, if I'm sober. But if I'm drunk, I'll smack you."

Fremont thought of pleading with him, then shrugged.

"Understood. Let me by, now."

Fremont realized that it had been inevitable from the beginning that Guarnec would resort to threats. In his unreasoning fashion, the Breton judged his young friend a traitor. A traitor to what? Guarnec himself could not have said. And there was no purpose seeking to explain to him that their situations were different, had been from birth, that it was normal that Fremont should have returned to his own mode of existence.

GUARNEC was nearly forty, and Fremont had just passed his twenty-fourth birthday. For that big fool's approval, Fremont was expected to throw away a good career and sentence himself to a life in cells and prison camps. That was madness.

Well, Fremont decided, he had jeopardized his chevrons enough as it was. He had alienated de Kolloch, who had previously been loftily friendly, and he was not too popular with his colleagues, who suspected him of siding with the unruly element among the privates.

There was no help for it: Guarnec would attack him some time. He knew the man's stubborn streak. And there was no way of avoiding him. A transfer at this time was unthinkable, with the company due to take the field. And, as Guarnec had talked loosely while drunk and the rumor had spread that he intended to 'smack Fremont on the mug', it would seem like a flight.

One result was already felt. Before, Fremont had often declined an invitation to go to town for the evening, as he had to study. Moreover, he was trying to avoid drinking. But now, when he made that excuse, the others nodded knowingly—Guarnec!

"The man's always on my mind."

That thought irritated him.

And it seemed that everyone was pushing him forward, which was partly true. Legionnaires, privates and noncoms, are human beings with normal curiosity and a liking for spectacles. All were eager to see whether Fremont could cope with Guarnec.

Fremont admired the Breton as a fighter, nevertheless felt that he could beat him. He was not as tall, not nearly as massive, but he was young and agile. He judged that Guarnec's bull-like strength was formidable against a partially drunken foe, a man who would stand and take it. But Fremont remem-

bered that he had been baffled for five minutes by a wiry little sergeant of aviation, back in Algeria, who had made a bet that he would stay on his feet that long if only gloved fists were used.

"It's the gloves," Guarnec had explained later. "I can't get going with them on. Awkward, you know, like swinging your booted feet into bed. Bare-handed, I'd have smacked him in thirty seconds."

But there had been something else, too—the smaller man's skill and spirit.

"I'll let him swing on me," Fremont resolved, "duck it and knock him on his behind with a shove. By that time, they'll grab him, hold him. And I'll warn them that I'll make charges if he continues."

But Captain de Kolloch must have heard whispers of the threats made by Guarnec, for he spoke to Fremont privately one afternoon.

"Don't like brawls. You understand? Undignified. Bad for prestige. Such things must be stopped at once. Handled according regulations. Other companies may permit. Their affair. Mine, no."

"Yes, Captain."

"First gesture, arrest. Will back you. Nonsense must end. Too much talk. Sergeant loses fight—no sergeant."

That left Fremont no alternative: If he chose to fight, he must win or give up his chevrons—voluntarily, as the records would show it. They always gave a beaten sergeant a chance to resign his rank. Even if he won, de Kolloch might demote him as a disciplinary measure—for the captain was not Hirschauer, who rather liked to see his noncoms uphold their authority with their fists.

Otherwise, he must have Guarnec arrested after the first blow, without striking back. That would be called: "Striking a superior in public", probably combined with "verbal insults to a superior in public", which meant from two to five years in prison camp. In Garnec's case, with his record, the maximum was sure. And five years for striking a noncom marked a man in the camps, and stretched to seven or eight.

That was the safe thing to do. In seven or eight years, Fremont would be beyond reach, a full lieutenant, perhaps a captain, if there was much active service available.

"What a selfish hog I'm getting to be," Fremont concluded. "Thinking of those years for myself. But what else can I do, short of ruining my chances?"

CHAPTER III

A SERGEANT . . . OR DEAD!

THE usual resort of the noncoms was a small establishment with music and a dance floor, where a drink cost seven to fifteen francs. Legionnaires were not allowed into it without showing that they could pay, and thus an automatic selection occurred. There, Fremont was sure of not meeting Guarnec. But one evening, still early, one of his comrades suggested:

"Let's go over to Lard-Tub's."

"No," someone else said. "It's full of privates."

And they all looked at Fremont, to see what his decision would be. The sergeant finished his iced drink slowly, half-smiled, mechanically tightened his belt.

"Oh, hell," he said rising, "you don't need to needle me long. I'll come along." He swept them all—there were four sergeants with him—with a bleak smile. "I wouldn't deprive you of your fun."

"You're crazy, Fremont. Nobody's said a thing about you."

"But you've heard Guarnec was there. And you wanted to see if I'd go. You're my kindly, devoted comrades." He stilled their protests with a glance. "You want a row. I'll make it here, if you prefer."

He felt more like himself than he had in many years. He was saying what he wanted to say. A definite sense of pleasure gripped him. To a man who once had the taste, fighting is like a drug—harmful, perhaps, but exhilarating. They trooped out behind him, and he entered the *bobinard* first.

Things were very quiet. Legionnaires were lined on benches, elbows on tables, drinking sagely, wine and weak anisettes. A Russian private was playing a mouth-organ, and even the mastiff chained in his corner seemed lulled by the melancholy tune.

Guarnec was not in sight, but he must be about, because some of his pals were present, the fellows he dragged in his train.

A brief pause, and the organ went on. The sergeants took a corner table, some distance away, and ordered bottled beer. The girls started to sing, to dance. In that spot, the noncoms were quality, wealthy customers.

One of the Legionnaires had arisen and gone through the rear door, to another branch of the house. Two minutes, later, two others left, through the front door. Those were more cautious than curious.

One of the sergeants sent the musician a drink, and a request for a favorite song. Lard-Tub, with unerring instinct, was calmly stripping the bar of breakable stuff, stowing it on the shelves behind.

Then the rear door opened, and Guarnec entered the main room, followed by the Legionnaire who had gone to inform him of the noncoms' arrival. He had been advised to leave, evidently, for he was speaking in a loud voice. "Why should I? I'm where I belong."

He did not look over toward Fremont, but crossed the room and sat with his back turned. There was an argument going on between him and the others. One patted his shoulder several times, persuasively.

"The dirty hypocrites," Fremont thought. "They want him to jump me, but they're arguing against it to prod him on. They know him."

"Let's go," one of the sergeants whispered.

"Look out, I might fool you and go," Fremont informed him.

There was a long pause, which the musician did his best to fill with harmony.

Then, slowly, Guarnec rose. Before turning, he shoved his képi to the back of his skull, unbuttoned the top fasteners of the white tunic. Then he come toward the table occupied by noncoms, his face hard despite a broad smile, the muscles of his mouth twitching spasmodically.

"Slumming?" he asked, without saluting.

Fremont tensed. The wheels had started to go around, the cogs were meshed.

There was a ceremonial, almost a ritual, to precede violence. Men, being articulate animals, must talk.

"Nobody's asked you anything, Legionnaire," one of the sergeants replied.

"I'm asking you."

"Go on and sit down."

"I'm not tired."

For thirty seconds, he stood there silently. The sergeants had resumed conversing in casual tones among themselves. One of them was drumming the table in time to the music.

"Why are you here?" Guarnec resumed.

"Go on, beat it." The sergeant who acted as spokesman shrugged. "What do you want, a bottle of beer?"

Guarnec shook his head, and addressed Fremont.

"Are you mute tonight, kid? Or does this guy do your talking?"

"I can talk," Fremont assured him.

"That's good. Now, I'm talking to you. This is my hangout—you know it. I don't like you here. You know that, too. I give you five minutes to get out."

"And after that?" Fremont asked.

"After that, I'll toss you out."

"You're addressing a sergeant," another noncom spoke up.

"You're in the wrong place to pull that stuff," Guarnec said. "It's between me and Fremont. If you mix in, the others will mix in." Several Legionnaires had risen and were hitching up their belts. Fremont started to smile. This was one thing his colleagues had not figured upon, as they did not know Guarnec well, nor the intense devotion he could create in his followers. "Your chevrons count as far as the street door, not in here."

THERE was a tense wait. And right in the middle of things, the door opened: The patrol, six Legionnaires and a sergeant on duty, a big, handsome Swiss with a calm face and clear-blue impassive eyes.

He entered the room, one hand passed through his belt.

"What's going on?" he asked, puzzled. "A guy just told me there was trouble in this dump. I see nothing."

His men had grounded arms, and were looking at the bottles longingly. They were forbidden to drink.

"There's no trouble, Heimoss," one of the sergeants said. "We were just leaving."

Guarnec looked around slowly, sneered.

"Put up job, eh? You came a bit too soon." He evidently thought that Sergeant Heimoss had come according to a plan made by Fremont, to catch him in the act. "But if it's trouble you want, you'll be served—"

Fremont had known from his tone what he was about to do. But he had no time to dodge, as he had intended. Guarnec's left hand had gripped his shoulder, hoisted him erect from the bench, while the big right fist smashed out for his face. He contrived to move his jaw aside; the blow grazed his cheek. He fell back, jarred.

"Get him," Heimoss called out.

His men were well trained. Three of them pinned the Legionnaires, by presenting bayonet tips to their chests, three others dropped their guns and grappled with Guarnec. They held him, but even the triple impact did not knock him down. He was not even struggling.

"You've got it now, kid," he said. "A swell court-martial case. All complete and safe, with patrol and everything. And five witnesses that you gave me no provocation. Five years, easy. Smart work, eh?"

Fremont had straightened, pulled out from behind the table. He spat blood on the floor, because his lips were cut. Yes, it was exactly how it should be: There would be no more trouble. Guarnec was done for. All he had to do was to allow the patrol to take him away. No wonder Guarnec believed the episode carefully organized!

"You want to make a report?" Sergeant Heimoss asked.

Fremont made up his mind in a flash.

"A report? What for?" he addressed the men holding Guarnec. "Let go of him!" And, as they did not understand what he meant at once, he shouted louder: "Let go of him, I tell you—"

They obeyed, and Guarnec stared, bewildered, as Fremont swung. The punch caught him squarely on the jaw, and he marked the blow with a rather ludicrous bobbing, half-falling, his fingertips touching the floor. He rose, reeled back two steps, his mouth agape. He was half-stunned.

"The door, damn it, the door!" Fremont shouted. And the nearest man pushed it closed, locked it. Fremont was tearing off his belt, his tunic. He tossed them and his képi into a corner. "Come

Jacot rolled in the grenades and swung off the ladder.

on, you bum, you asked for it. I'll show you whether I have to ask help to handle you, you—"

"Eh," said Guarnec, "eh, kid—maybe—"

He was bewildered, startled beyond thought. By striking him back, Fremont had ruined his advantage. And by taking off his tunic, he was accepting the encounter man to man. It made Guarnec realize that he had done his former pupil an injustice, and made him hesitate long enough for Fremont to get another free shot at his jaw.

Again, he acknowledged the blow with that bobbing fall, but he rose with his arms up, guarding himself. He knew only one way to fight, to drive ahead, and he ran at Fremont. In theory, the sergeant knew what to do—dart aside and punch from a distance. But Guarnec was all over him in a flash, pounding with short, hard blows, grunting as he punched. Fremont was pushed back against a pillar; the impact knocked the breath from his body. Instinctively, he grasped the flying arms, wrestled. When he contrived to pull clear, dodge aside, he was startled to see that the Breton was laughing.

"Come away from that pillar—I don't want to brain you. Eh, what a boxer one has become—you act like an Englishman—"

HE rushed in again, and Fremont caught him squarely between the eyes, a blow hard enough to crack a skull. But the sergeant, as the fists buffeted him, heard his laugh. He crouched lower, and struck for the body. According to all natural laws, the liver of a chap who drank as much as Guarnec must be sensitive. But it was like pounding a barrel.

How had that little aviator done it? It was foolish to stand toe to toe—he knew that—but when he broke ground, tried to get space to move about in, his legs struck benches, stools, or he bumped into the spectators, and always, that great mass was before him, surmounted by that grinning, bleeding face, and hard blows rained about his ears.

"He's playing with me, making it last," he thought.

His old admiration for Guarnec was still strong—he did not believe it possible that he, Fremont, was standing up under those murderous smashes. Then, as they locked arms and struggled, he looked up, and saw, very near his eyes, the side of his adversary's neck and head. The veins stood out, the temples bulged, and he could hear the grinding of Guarnec's teeth as the man strained to pull away. The forehead was shining with sweat.

"He's feeling it, too!"

As always in a fight, his head was beginning to clear after a first fog, part pain, part anger. His body was attaining that light quality, as if it were detached from his brain, shocked and suffering far away. And his fear of Guarnec, for he knew now that deep within he had feared him, had gone. Guarnec was laughing and kidding, but he was trying, trying hard.

All right, come on again—lock his arms, that's it. Not bad, that time—only two or three socks that mattered. Funny thing that those did not hurt as much as the first. They did, but a guy didn't realize it. All right, again—now, he has the idea that when we break loose next I'll step back and wait, so—

Fremont leaped forward, bringing his right fist down in a chopping blow, in the hollow between the massive pectorals, just above the breastbone. Peculiar blow that, which he had perfected at one time, after someone else had struck him that way. It jars, seems to fold back the organs on each other. Sort of a compression feeling, maybe worse than a sock in the stomach. In the stomach? Why not? There.

Now, Guarnec was holding on, and he was strong. But not as strong as you'd have thought from that bone-breaking handshake. No, Fremont had felt grips just as strong. Eh, Guarnec was not what he used to be. That's it, pal—put your arms around my shoulders, that's the idea—now, try with the left, then with the right in the armpit—there.

That's a dirty blow, and hard to shoot in, unless the other fellow is big, as big as Guarnec, and is foolish enough to clasp high. In the armpit, and another on the ribs just below. Sort of a funny laugh, now, eh, Guarnec?

"Come on, you big slob—"

"Coming!"

They paused and grinned at each other, hitched their trousers. Guarnec's nose was bleeding, and there was red smeared over his face, even into his hair. The left side of his face was swelling, and gave him a permanent wink. Then Guarnec rushed again—how did he do it? He looked slow and clumsy and he was on you before you could duck. Fremont felt a jarring impact under his chin: The Breton had brought up his bent forearm sharply.

"So that's starting," Fremont thought. It was a nasty thing—two or three and you felt as if the top of your skull was flying off each time. Gave you a headache. A pain in his thigh, a blow with the knee. What was it? A kick and the knee—

Like this—no, not quite. They were yelling all around, yelling. What about? Oh, Guarnec was bending over, bending over, pawing with his hands—one for the ear, that made the arm come up, so —and one for the jaw—

Guarnec was on all fours.

Fremont hurled himself upon him, struck him in the flank with one knee, rolled him over, punched at his head. Guarnec brushed off, and they scrambled across the floor like floundering fish, sliding and slipping on the tiles, each trying to rise first. The lamplight fell full on Guarnec's face—his mouth was open, gasping. You could not see that left eye any more.

But he could rush, still. Rush faster than Fremont could dodge. The sergeant felt his back against the pillar again, but this time, Guarnec was not laughing, and gave him no respite. He had to get out of there himself, aside, a step to the right. What's the matter now—

Guarnec was craning his head to one side, peering around. Oh, he could not see Fremont, because Fremont, dodging to his own right, had reached his left side. Most convenient. And there you are—you're wanted downstairs, Guarnec —there you go—

That should settle you—right on the jaw!

Why, the dirty slob—you're stubborn, aren't you? Go down, go down—why, we must have been at this fifteen minutes, an hour. Crying, are you? Crying with one eye! Crocodile tears! You've cried before. I've seen you cry—afraid you're licked—

Down again—you won't rise this time, if I have to nail you to the floor. Now—

Guarnec had dropped to his side, arms sprawled before his face, one leg hunched up. There was something final about the way he fell, but Fremont had to make sure. One or two punches would not hurt. He leaped forward—

And that hunched leg distended, like the kick of a mule, aimed perfectly with Guarnec's one good eye. It caught the sergeant below the sternum. And Fremont was not hurled backward; the impulse of his body seemed to just match the drive of that muscular leg. Slowly, that leg bent back into position, Guarnec rolled on the flat of his shoulders, arms curved to protect his face against a possible counter-blow.

But Fremont was standing there, mouth open, shocked into unconsciousness. After two seconds, his legs folded, he sagged to the floor. Knees, elbow, head—his skull resounded with a sickening thump. Guarnec leaped to his feet and stepped forward.

But Sergeant Heimoss, pale and solemn, extended his arm across his chest. His already thick accent was thicker.

"No need, Legionnaire. You've won."

THE next morning, Fremont was allowed to leave the infirmary. The military surgeon told him: "You will feel pain for a while, but don't worry about it. There is no fracture. If you breathe again, that blow is seldom serious." And he nodded sagely, as if unaware of the humor in his remark, "You did a fine job on the other chap, if that's a consolation."

"Is he hurt?"

"Nothing broken. But he isn't pretty."

Fremont went to his quarters, eyes straight ahead. He passed acquaintances in the yard, but no one spoke to him.

Well, it was over. He had lost. Guarnec had beaten him in the end, as might have been expected. But he had been compelled to resort to a trick that he himself had said was reserved for small men against big ones. There was some satisfaction in that.

No one was in the room. Fremont ripped the stitches holding the chevrons in place on the cuffs. He wanted to weep. Three years' work gone for nothing, for an instant of pride, to save a fool from his folly. He was losing nine-tenths of his pay, many privileges—he would have to dispose of his small trunk, for instance. As an ordinary Legionnaire, he was entitled to a pack, that was all.

Where would he be sent? For they would not keep him in this company. Probably to some unit in Northern Morocco, or even to Algeria. Certainly not to an actively engaged outfit. And, away from action, promotion is very slow in the Legion.

He picked up the pen on the table, dipped it into the ink bottle, and methodically wrote out the necessary documents, which would save the need of a trial and official demotion. *Remise volontaire des galons,* they called this, voluntary surrender of chevrons. As if any man would give up nine-tenths of his pay without compulsion! Automatically, he dated the paper. Then he wrote:

"Report—"

"Sergeant Fremont, André-Jules, of the March Company, Tadla Battalion, concerning the voluntary surrender of his chevrons—"

He lighted a cigarette thoughtfully when he was half through, and the tobacco stung the cuts on his lips. He rose to look at his face in the mirror, admired the purple and violet bruises. No, a guy with a mug like that could not stand before a section and give orders! That was the way with formalities: You saw their purpose, if you studied them a bit.

He signed firmly, underlining his last name, written a bit larger than the rest: De Kolloch liked that.

He went out again, crossed the yard for the second time, toward the office. Yes, the orderly said, the captain was in already. Fremont entered, took four brisk steps, paused, saluted. He handed the paper over. De Kolloch glanced at it.

"The expected document?"

"Yes, Captain."

"In order. Very neat." He swept Fremont from head to foot, scowled. "No right remove chevrons. Application for surrender not yet approved. I approve it now." He rose crisply, like a figure on springs. For the first time in many days, Fremont saw him smile, as he offered his hand. "I understand you acquitted yourself creditably against a noted expert. Congratulations."

Breathless, Fremont gripped the hand in silence.

"There was no other way out. I understood that as well as you did. But each one to his job, eh? Do not be discouraged; this is merely a short postponement."

"Where will I be transferred, Captain? I'd like—"

"That's arranged. Document prepared—" de Kolloch sat down, signed a paper, stamped it with the official seal of his company. "There you are. You may leave. Good luck."

Outside, Fremont looked at his transfer. He was puzzled.

"Legionnaire Fremont is placed at the disposal of Captain Hirschauer, commanding Tadla Battalion. Field equipment. Baggage may be left with company stores. To take effect immediately."

Less than an hour later, he was interviewed by Hirschauer. The old officer rose, closed the door himself, gestured for Fremont to sit down, pushed a box of cigarettes near him. Then he walked up and down, hands locked behind his back.

"You're lucky, Fremont, very lucky. I have a debt to discharge. When I heard about your case—I mean, Guarnec and you—I thought: Here's my chance.

"I'm Alsatian. I ran away from home at sixteen, to avoid serving in the German Army. You couldn't wait too long, as their police watched you when you neared military age. I lied like a good one and passed for eighteen, entered the Legion. I come from good farming people, peasants, honest, hard-working. For me, too, there was a Guarnec. By another name—an Alsatian, like myself. He's dead now. Because of him, I took *nineteen* years to get my commission, yet when I heard of his death, I was heartbroken."

Hirschauer remained silent for minutes.

"A captain straightened me out. So, I fix it up for you. You are transferred to another regiment. But that regiment has just sent a company up this way. You enter that company, nominally. But you are immediately detached to special duty. *Groupe-franc* for the coming campaign."

The *groupe-franc* is an independent outfit recruited from various units for especially dangerous missions. Fremont knew that the next few months would not be devoid of excitement.

"Captain Jacot is in charge. Report to him. By the end of the coming show, you'll be a sergeant again, or dead. You may leave."

CHAPTER IV

DEATH PATROL

ONLY a fourth of the special group was composed of Legionnaires. There were a number of Frenchmen from colonial regiments, a few Moors from the *Tirailleurs* and two giant blacks from a Senegalese unit. Sergeants, corporals and privates, there was not a man in the lot who did not have a few citations for bravery, not one who had not been wounded.

Captain Jacot showed four rows of ribbons on his tunic. He was so small that one wondered how he had contrived to enter the service. Soaking wet, he could not have tipped the beams at one hundred and twenty-five. His soft voice and his shy manner were a bit amusing. But given a couple of scores of resolute men at his back, equipped with trench knives, clubs and hand grenades, and he was in his element.

"He is the devil," the native soldiers claimed.

He received Fremont coldly. "You are here by special favor. Hirschauer tells me you have guts. Don't make a liar out of him."

Compared to him, de Kolloch was warmth itself. And as for discipline, there was none exacted, so far as outside conduct was concerned. A man's scrapes were his own if he managed to settle them. But when in the small camp which Jacot had established near the town, the men were his slaves. He had achieved that miracle—there was alcohol, for use in emergencies, and it was untouched.

"No one goes out tonight," Jacot would say. And no one went out. There was no need to set sentries and spies. No one disobeyed this captain.

"You want to be careful when on a job," a raw-boned Frenchman warned Fremont. "He'll blow your brains out if he even thinks you're flinching. I've seen him do it—two years ago, up around Ascerdoun. A volunteer from the Spahis, a sergeant who had turned in his chevrons to be with us. Thought himself tough. Well, he started cracking as we were laying in wait for a gang of raiders. He coughed and gave away the show two minutes too early. The guys beat it. And Jacot, who had recognized the sound of the other's voice, called him forward, put a bullet right through his skull. Never said a word about it, before or after."

Fremont exchanged his boots for sandals soled with strips of tire rubber, his tunic for a *gandoura* and his képi for a turban. When the special group gathered, it appeared more like a band of Barbary pirates than an organized army unit. When the captain had anything to say, the men did not line up, but formed a circle around him.

Jacot would give his instructions slowly, clearly, shifting from one tongue to another without hesitation, French, Arabic, German, Russian. He might not speak all of them grammatically, but he could make himself understood.

He had instituted peculiar drills, which Fremont attended with the others. Approaching a given point on one's stomach, for instance, and hitting a given target with a grenade from a prone position. The captain supervised, sneering, criticizing, never praising. If a man did well, what wonder? It was his job—and in an emergency, his life. Fremont heard him reprove a man once for not covering himself properly. The second reproof was a stone in the face, flung with unerring aim at a distance of thirty feet.

"See what I mean now? If that had been a bullet, you'd be dead. Keep your damn head down—follow the heels of the man ahead of you."

One evening, at dusk, mules were brought into the special group's encampment. The men who fetched them were sent away, and Jacot assigned the animals to his own followers.

"If anyone can't ride, he had best drop out now," he said. "After we've started, no excuse will be accepted. If your behind gets sore, I don't want to hear about it. Line up for supplies."

The men received two hundred and fifty rifle cartridges, one hundred revolver or pistol cartridges, hand grenades, reserve rations for one week.

"Everyone here tonight," Jacot snapped.

AT ONE in the morning, he awakened his men. They started out astride the mules. No one but the captain knew the destination, the goal of their mission.

At dawn, after a strenuous trip through the hills, they camped in a wood. No fires were permitted; the men were forbidden to smoke, to sing, to talk above a whisper. Jacot gave the example. He sat all day in one spot, never moving. It was dull, this patient waiting. After nightfall, Jacot gave a brief order, and they were on the move once again.

Fremont had gone on patrols in the region, and he had a map. He picked up landmarks, tried to keep track of their progress. He knew that the captain was avoiding villages and frequented trails, noted that he never marched his men along a crest.

"We've passed into the hostile zone," he informed one of his comrades.

"I wouldn't wonder," the other agreed. "By the way, hide that map and don't let the captain hear you discussing our direction. I forgot to tell you something —he does the thinking. All we've got to know is that we're moving, and that we'll have a dirty job to do at the end."

On the third evening, they only marched from twilight to midnight.

"We'll stop for three hours," Jacot announced. "Better get some sleep." He paused. "We're surrounded by hundreds of natives. Those of you who feel you can't get along without a smoke, use a blanket. I saw two matches flare last night. I said nothing. Tonight, I'll act."

Fremont was on sentry duty. He huddled against a tree, peering into the darkness. When he glanced behind, he could see the dim bundles made by the sleeping men. Once, he started! The captain had come up noiselessly; he touched the Legionnaire's shoulder, vanished again.

At two forty-five, Captain Jacot gave the signal to rise, a soft note, low and melodious, on the tin pipe serving him for a whistle. The men gathered around him for instructions.

"Four of you must remain here with the mules. A squadron of Spahis will be sent to pick you up. If you are attacked, or the cavalry fails to show up by ten in the morning, try to get the animals back into our lines. Here is a sketch showing this spot and the probable emplacements of our positions at dawn. I know it will be a hard task to handle so many animals, but it must be done and I count on you not to lose any." He named the four who were to remain. And so strong was his prestige that not one of those chosen uttered a word of protest, although they knew that they would have hard work and no glory.

"The time has come to outline our mission. The rest of us will proceed north-east, to take a fortification from behind. We will attain our starting position at five-fifteen, and wait there for the first firing. A battalion, mixed Legion and *Tirailleurs,* will make a frontal attack and occupy the defenders. We must climb the rear wall undiscovered, cross a sort of courtyard, and scale a second wall—the riflemen will be in pits dug below those walls, some distance from them.

"This surprise attack by our group is judged necessary because of the presence with the natives of a brace of renegades, deserters from the Legion, and the reported presence of two to five automatic rifles of comparatively recent make —we are sure of a Madsen automatic being there. Our main objective, consequently, will be to render those guns useless, by capture if possible, by destruction with grenades in any case.

"It is possible that our presence around here is known and our purpose guessed, for native emissaries are known

to circulate in our zone. A counter-surprise may be planned against us. In that event, and no matter the danger, drive forward—if you are forced to shelter, seek that shelter ahead. In no case retreat. Your sergeants have the usual instructions. If there is an order to retire, it must come from me.

"In case I am killed or too badly wounded to have my presence of mind, continue the original plan, the neutralizing and destruction of the automatics, to the end."

He gave the order to start.

THE first to go were two Moroccan infantrymen, the Senegalese and a French corporal. Five men, to clear the way silently in case outposts were encountered. Jacot followed on their heels and the others crept behind, single file, by combat groups. Most of the men were veterans of that sort of work, and those who were new, Fremont among them, were placed between experts.

Counting Jacot, there were thirty-seven men in line, all carrying weapons, canteens, equipment. But there was not a sound that could have been discerned twenty yards away. They sped along like ghosts, so quietly that Fremont found himself doubting that he was accompanied. But, now and again, came the touch of a hand from the chap ahead, warningly: A hole, or a log across the path, a boulder to be circled, caution!

And Fremont would hold out his left hand then, until the man following him touched it. Jacot, or whoever was really leading, had a phenomenal instinct for finding covered spots. Even on a dark night, moving silhouettes can be distinguished on crests, so they sought ravines, gullies.

"Five minutes rest."

The whisper came down the line. Fremont passed it on, then squatted, trying to breathe harder, to distend his lungs. The pace was telling on him, and the nervous tension was probably even more tiring. The straps and slings caught his body in a web of leather and canvas, chafed and burned. He was reminded that he had not worn an ordinary harness for many months. This made him think of his lost chevrons, and of Guarnec.

If he were killed tonight, it could be traced directly to the Breton. Directly to that time, far in the past, in Sidi-bel-Abbés, when Guarnec had taken his part against the German bully. But if one undertook to analyze destiny, one could plunge back into past centuries, to find cause and effect. To take into account what had made him, Fremont, what he was, and the things that had gone to form the man known as Guarnec.

A jealous cop in a Coast village in Brittany—and Fremont found himself in the darkness of the Moroccan hills!

"Pass the word—get going—"

"Going."

A long spell of strain and silence. Another halt. Marching again. Far off, a village dog scented them and started to bark; other dogs joined in. A damn good thing dogs couldn't talk—their masters would quiet them, believing they were disturbed by a wild boar or a fox. The distant barking, nevertheless, had an ominous, heart-cramping sound.

"Halt. At ease—"

The detachment spread out in a long line on the flank of a hill, behind a low lift of ground. They had arrived. There was nothing to be done now, save wait for the signal to attack.

Fremont eased the straps, stretched out on his stomach, rested. But his hands touched the musette bag distended by the heavy grenades; the bayonet passed through his belt like a dagger, and the long, broad bladed knife hung in a sheath fastened around his chest. With his Lebel carbine, his automatic pistol, he carried enough to kill hundreds of men, but he might not kill anybody. War is a wasteful business.

He thought of the deserters mentioned by Jacot: One of them must be Zurn, whom he had known well. A scrawny little fellow, not even considered fit to make a corporal. He had been caught stealing small change from his comrades, arrested. And he had escaped from jail, taken to the hills. There, that anonymous, under-sized Legionnaire had uncovered himself as a capable fighter. He was under sentence of death for sundry 'murders'.

Reports were probably exaggerated. One automatic rifle had become three, four, five. But it was certain that one was present, and likely to be provided with enough ammunition. Cases of cartridges for such weapons had been stolen from a convoy.

"Day."

Fremont thought that word so hard that he imagined someone had shouted it. Yes, day was breaking. One by one, his comrades were emerging, darker shapes against the floating gray haze. And the bugles and trumpets resounded: The French expedition was at the appointed spot, at the appointed hour.

The thudding of a mountain battery, four guns popping one after the other, rhythmically. Then the first remote crackle of rifle fire, as the outposts came in contact. Gradually, the combat took shape, as new guns opened.

Very high, so high that their motors were heard like the humming of insects, five planes soared. They must have started from Meknes during the night, at about the same time as the special group had started the trip on foot. They passed overhead, and Fremont had a foolish impulse to wave.

Captain Jacot came to speak to the sergeant of Fremont's group. When he crouched he grew so small that it made one smile. But there was nothing ludicrous in the expression of his face. He was not pleased.

"The swine, the heavy-footed swine," he said, speaking of the infantry. "Supposed to be up here by this time. Suppose some reinforcements come up for the natives in the dump up there, and see us? That'll be pretty. What are they waiting for?"

"Never can tell," the man questioned replied calmly. "Never can tell, Captain." And when the officer had darted elsewhere, he laughed softly. "Always the same—he can't stand the last few minutes. Gets like a cat that smells fresh liver."

At last, rifles started to crack not very far off. Jacot put the tin pipe to his lips, blew one note: Attention. And he gestured: Fix bayonets.

The blades were unsheathed and fastened to the rifles. These were not the long blades of the infantry, but short, thick slabs of steel, as solid as hunting knives.

Jacot swung his arm high, forward, hand extended.

THEY rose and trotted after him. When they emerged from the hollow, they saw their goal before them, not two hundred meters away. A square, massive fortress of dingy brown walls, surmounted by a watch-tower, the whole evoking pictures of feudal castles.

No one was in sight—probably all the defenders were facing the approaching infantry on the opposite side. There was an arched gateway, but the portals were of thick oak, barred with heavy irons. There was no hesitation, scarcely a pause. The bigger of the Senegalese backed against the wall; another man used his joined hands for a stirrup, stood on his shoulders. And the little captain, like the star of an acrobatic team, scrambled up, knelt on the shoulders of the second man, placed his hands on the wall, and hoisted himself upon it.

It had been so well, so rapidly done that Fremont felt like applauding. Jacot had hooked a piece of steel over the wall, dropped a knotted rope. A few men followed him, lowered other ropes. In three minutes, the whole detachment was on top of the guard-wall, about three feet wide.

Fifteen feet below was a large courtyard. It was absolutely empty, which Fremont thought strange. Busy as the defenders were with the attackers, surely some of them must be about. Captain Jacot himself was uneasy, it was evident, for he scanned the walls, the loopholes, for a long minute before giving the signal to carry on. All trotted after him down an incline to the yard.

Jacot did not shout, did not speak, but he kept waving his hands palm outward, motioning for his men to keep spread out. He was white, and his face was twitching.

He lifted his hand again—and before he brought it down to indicate the direction, a ripping discharge hammered. The air was filled with sound, with the whine of metal, and the multiplied im-

The surprise was complete. There was little shouting.

pacts crackled against the wall like hail.

"Come on—" Jacot screamed.

He headed straight for the wall from which the shots came. It was, in fact, the safest course, for there was no cover in the yard, the doors were barred, and it would have been madness to run back upon the inclined way to drop to safety outside. Well, Fremont thought as he galloped with the rest, we know that there is one automatic here!

He gained that wall, hugged it. And, from the opposite side came other detonations. But those were from rifles and carbines. Nevertheless, the special group was caught here, like rats in a barrel. There were seven or eight men lying in the yard, in the open, who had lost the race.

Jacot, darting about faster than any of them, was the coolest. He was throwing grenades at a wind w, a window from which the automatic fired. The first two fell back, exploded, the third went in. The majority of the men, backed against

the wall, were answering the rifle fire from the other side.

"Blow in that door—knock it in!" Jacot cried. He literally threw himself on it, fought it, as if he believed he could smash it down with his puny weight. "Knock it in! No use blowing the lock—it's bolted—"

An elongated, dark-faced French private pushed the officer aside. He had a short-handled sledge in his hands. With the fatalism of his kind, he turned his back to the bullets, swung that metal club as calmly, deliberately as if working in a machine-shop. One of the thick planks soon splintered, broke, and Jacot tossed two grenades through the hole.

Then he reached in and jerked loose the inner bars. The way was open and one by one the raiders leaped in. Twice, those inside had to clear the doorway of a corpse, for the marksmen across the way were concentrating their fire on that one spot, which all must pass.

Then the door was masked again with planks taken from a pile inside. In the scant light slanting from a loophole, the survivors took stock of the situation: They were twenty-two standing, three of them wounded. It was idle to be concerned about those outside, the fallen. They were dead, for the natives fired at anything that moved. Twenty-two live men in here, and five corpses—the two dragged in, and three Moors, killed by the grenades.

IN THE sudden hush, the first sound of which Fremont became aware was the captain's laughter. Jacot was laughing, almost giggling. Perhaps it was his way of weeping. There was blood on his hands, blood on his face. His képi had been knocked off, and his round skull was covered with a reddish growth, cropped short.

"There's only one automatic in this place," he announced. "If there had been another, it would have been across the way. They skewered us good, didn't they?" He took out a case, lighted a cigarette with his bloody fingers. "And, my lads, that automatic is right above us, trapped." He laughed once more. "And as long as we keep it busy, it's neutralized, isn't it? How does one get up?"

There was a crudely made ladder in a corner, leading up to a trap-door. There was an iron loop hanging down. Without hesitation, Jacot stepped up, passed one of the climbing hooks through the metal ring. "Two of you hang on to the rope and hold the door down, eh—in case they have grenades and feel tempted to toss them down."

True, had a grenade been thrown into that crowded room, it would have caused considerable damage. Two of the largest men grabbed the rope.

"Nice job," Jacot resumed placidly. "They knew we were coming, after all. So they set this nice trap for us. Their only mistake was in overestimating the efficiency of that automatic. They believed they could cut down the lot of us in a minute. Doesn't work that way. Now—"

"They're trying to lift that trap, Captain," a man said.

"Don't let them," Jacot smiled. "Quiet—someone is calling—"

They grew silent. And they could hear very clearly: "Captain — Captain Jacot—"

"Present."

"You're helpless," the other continued in fair French. "Drop your weapons and go out one by one, and no harm will be done you. There is no need for more killing now."

"Eh, eh—" Jacot called back, "Now that it's your turn, you want to quit. I make the same proposition, my friend. Drop your weapons and come down one by one, and no harm will be done to you. Not immediately. But you most certainly will be executed before nightfall."

"Your people have gone back. We can see over the wall from here. I give you my word—"

Jacot pointed his automatic at the approximate spot from which the voice issued, fired. Immediately, retaliating shot splintered the wood. The men dodged aside, like people avoiding splashing mud from a passing car.

"You know what that man's word is worth," the captain said. "We'd be massacred as soon as we were in the yard. Now, two of you pick up that pole—right—prop it under the trap. I'll

get on the ladder—so. Pass me two grenades, Mahoud. Thank you." He was speaking in a low voice. "When I count three, the guys at the ropes ease up, the guys with the plank shove up. Ready. One, two, three—"

The trick was performed perfectly. The edge of the trap-door rose a few inches, suddenly. Jacot rolled in the grenades, grasped the rope and swung off the ladder, adding his weight to the pull of the two men below. He had not alighted when two dull detonations resounded above; then, as the sounds passed out of the building and returned through the loophole opening on the yard, the room was filled with noise, while loosened dirt rained from the ceiling and thick dust floated about.

Then silence, stunning silence.

One of the men started to cough chokingly, and foolishly went to the loophole for air. One of the waiting snipers across the way put a slug through his skull. Twenty-one now, Fremont kept score. Two men masked the opening with a plank. That shut out most of the light and they stood in the obscure room, waiting, waiting.

Plop . . . plop . . . plop, plop . . . plop. . . .

"What's that?" a man whispered.

Jacot flashed the beam of a small electric torch on the floor, in the direction of the sound. There were damp spots on the beaten earth, and looking up, they saw blood seeping through the crack of the door, sliding, widening for five or six inches of dark stain, gathering into brilliant red globules that swelled, sagged and dropped—*plop, plop!*

"Somebody's caught a hunk," Jacot announced. "Let's see what the upstairs tenants have to say." He climbed on the ladder, knocked with the muzzle of his pistol. "Eh there, how are you making out?"

They waited anxiously for several seconds.

"Mahoud, another grenade. Same business, my lads. One, two—"

Fremont admired the little fellow. He was taking a chance that the moment the trap-door rose rifles and pistols would fire through the opening, blast his head to bits at a range of two feet. At three, the edge jerked up, Jacot flung the missile. The panel slapped down; they heard the explosion.

"There was extra weight on it this time, Captain," one of the men at the plank offered. "Probably a stiff."

"They can't hide a thing from you, eh?" Jacot smiled cheerfully. "*Eh bien,* we can't stay here forever. I'm going up there to see what's what. Push hard at the signal. One—"

"Captain, please—" A round-headed little chap pushed forward. "Let me go first. If I am killed, it doesn't matter much. The rest need you."

"They must," Jacot agreed, grinning down. "Look how superbly I have led them so far! Thank you. I appreciate the thought. Come on, one—two—three!"

AS SOON as the trap-door lifted, he bounded up the last rungs, firing fast. He disappeared for two seconds; then his face bent over the opening. "Consolidate that door down there, and let a few come up."

Fremont was fourth in line. The room he entered had been used as a storage place for grain. Sacks of wheat, of rice, of lentils, were piled against the walls, leaving a small square free in the center. There were three loopholes, two in front and one at an angle. Through this last, it was possible to see over the outer wall, toward the French lines.

"This is a mess," Jacot said with disgust.

There had been three men up here. The grenade explosions had mangled them. Underfoot was a reddish mud, formed by grain leaked from the burst sacks, by water from the perforated skins hanging from the ceiling, by blood. Two of the dead were Berber mountaineers. The third, although garbed as they had been, was a European. This one had died near one of the loopholes, his hands holding the Madsen automatic.

"Trying to shove it out so we wouldn't get it," one of the Frenchmen said with awe. "Managed to toss out all the ammunition down to the yard. Look, the boxes are emptied."

"Had guts, eh," Jacot nodded approv-

ingly. "Slide this meat downstairs. Let's see what we can do. Two men at the loopholes, and try to make the chaps across the way realize we have good shots on our side. Fremont—" He held out his hands. "Pour some of that water over my hands, won't you?"

He washed his fingers, wiped them on his neckcloth. Then he produced a notebook and a pencil, started to sketch. "The wall here, door here—Let's see—the guard-path must pass just back of this wall—" He pointed his pencil at the rear partition: "Get tools and knock a hole through. I don't intend to stay here doing nothing."

The room, fifteen wide and perhaps twenty long, was as crowded as a café on pay-night, noisier than a machine shop. The men at the loopholes were firing often, and a crew of four men was breaking down the rear wall, with crowbars, the sledge and small trenching tools. The surface plaster was knocked off, and the porous native cement crumbled to dust. The flat stones, the loose bricks, were passed from hand to hand, dropped below.

"Eh, Captain, look," the man at the angle loophole called. "Ain't that pretty?"

In the distance, the infantry sections were advancing against the mountain tribesmen. It was the first time that Fremont had seen an attack by the Legion from the other side, from above. He wanted to cheer at the precision, the orderliness of it all, the rising of the lines, the swift advance, the pause for breath, which brought other sections on their feet, doubling forward.

Fremont was leaned over the captain's shoulder, breathing hard. The officer looked at him, smiled. "Does something to you, eh, Legionnaire? Can you pick your own lot? Are they in sight?"

Fremont nodded. Instinctively, he sought for the man who had taken the place that would have been his. He grunted with satisfaction: His fellows were all right, they had drawn big Joulié for a sergeant. Couldn't mistake that guy—he ran like a loping horse.

The staccato discharge of an automatic much nearer than those of the Legion suddenly pierced the din. Out there, that sound acted like a signal. The entire line of advance went down, hugged the ground.

"Light machine-gun, Maxim," Jacot guessed.

"Spanish automatic, Captain," one of the men corrected: "I was a machine gunner in the Spanish Legion. Can't mistake it. Good gun, but heats quick."

"How's that hole coming along?" the captain asked.

"We're through, Captain, but there's a drop on the other side." The laborers paused as Jacot fell on all fours, plunged into the hole. He emerged, dusted his hands. "About eight feet to the guard-wall, aisle below, fifteen feet deep. Get a couple of planks up here, while you widen the hole a bit." He grinned. "It's big enough for me, but some of the mastodons would get stuck."

Outside, the automatic had stopped suddenly.

"What did I tell you? She heats."

"Maybe they have nothing to shoot at."

THE planks were being shoved up from below. They were hard to swing about, as they were ten or eleven feet in length, while the ceiling did not give more than seven feet clearance and the trap-door opened the wrong way for an easy slide into place. There was much grunting and scuffling, shifting of sacks. With the marksmen forced to stand aside from the loophole, the enemy had a clear field, and slugs whined in, smacked on wood, coughed noisily into sacks.

"There she goes. Watch it—right—a bit this way—"

Two planks were pushed out, cautiously. One dropped, over-balanced, to the aisle below. The other, carefully propped at their end, pushed further and further, reached the wall, rested securely. It was only six inches in width, but Jacot scrambled across it like a squirrel. He squatted to give instructions to those behind.

"Three men stay in the room downstairs, guard door. Six men in upper room. The others come here."

Fremont stooped low, crawled through the hole in the wall. Between the build-

ing conquered by the raiders and the pathway along the outer wall, there was a gap of perhaps ten feet and a drop to the narrow yard below of over twenty feet. He engaged himself on the narrow, sagging plank. He was afraid it would break. He weighed nearly one hundred and ninety pounds; his uniform, rifle and equipment must weigh more than another fifty.

Jacot reached out, caught him by the collar and dragged him on. "Come on, come on—" Fremont stood up, safe on the wall, and the next man was already arriving. It was strange to be in the open, comparatively safe, with the clear sky above, and clean air to breathe.

"Next, next—" Jacot called impatiently.

"Captain," a voice replied out of the hole, "you said three below, six above. There are two badly wounded—"

Jacot laughed.

"Of course. I'm always under the impression my men are immortal. Well, you chaps inside hold out. Come on, lads, we have a machine-gun to neutralize."

He scuttled along the pathway, a diminutive little guy, full of hell.

The comparative calm did not last a minute. The architecture of the fortress allowed a clear field to snipers in the other wing at one point, a stretch of fifteen to twenty yards visible to them across flat-roofs between higher structures. Whether Jacot missed this or disregarded it, he did not stop. For three strides, he went untouched, then he stumbled, recovered, ran on, to slide to his face just short of masking walls.

Instinctively, Fremont had dodged back when the first bullets greeted him. The others crowded behind him and watched the captain. They thought him killed. Other slugs were flacking the bricks near him. Then they heard his voice.

"Come ahead, you swine! I said, cover forward, always."

Fremont mechanically slapped the top of his képi to hold it in place and sprinted across. He believed the officer would rise, that he had been playing dead for the benefit of the others, but he hurdled him and reached shelter. He was but four or five yards away.

"You hit, Captain?"

"What the devil do you think I'm staying here for?"

Another man was bounding across, leaping like a kangaroo. He was drawing the bullets, so Fremont rushed out, lifted the captain and carried him back. They laid him down again.

"Right leg, Legionnaire," Jacot indicated.

Fremont slit the leg of the trousers, bared the wound. The bullet had gone through the muscular part, missing the bone. A first-aid bandage was applied. And while this was carried on, the raiders were rushing across one by one.

"Help me up," Jacot said.

Fremont picked him up under the arms, set him on his feet. Jacot hobbled two or three steps. "I can walk a bit. I'll hang on to you, Fremont. Are we all here?"

"All but Charmont, Captain. I don't know whether he was hit or not, but he fell off. I looked down—he isn't moving."

Jacot clung to Fremont's arm and hobbled on.

"Stupid business, the human body," he grumbled. "A hole the size of a ten *sous* piece anywhere, and you're washed up." The captain shivered. Suddenly, he fell. Without releasing his grip on Fremont's sleeve, his body swung forward. Even that will of iron could not overcome pain and loss of blood. He had fainted.

FREMONT hesitated. Should he leave the officer here?

If some prowling natives found him first, they would murder him, torture him. The Legionnaire picked up the automatic pistol, slipped it in a pocket of his breeches. Then he lifted the little man in his arms. The first few steps were easy; then the task grew harder.

But, as a Legionnaire, he had to finish what he started. When he caught up with the others, he was wet with perspiration, almost nauseated from fatigue.

They had stopped at an angle of the defensive wall. To go further would have brought them under fire from the opposite wing. Here, they were safe, for the walls rose sheer and it was not possible to fire upon them at that sharp

angle. Fremont knew why: This construction dated back to the days of flintlocks, had not been planned to allow for firing at long range.

Down below, plainly visible in their rifle pits, were the Berbers. Not one of them granted the wall behind a single glance. They had not been informed. Moroccans, although fierce natural fighters, have little sense of organization, and their liaison service was nonexistent. Each man had probably left it to someone else to carry news to the fighting pits.

"What do we do now?" asked one of the raiders.

"I'll try to bring Jacot around," another man said. He poured cognac between the captain's teeth, from a small, leather-covered bottle found on the officer. "That's it, Captain, take it easy—"

Jacot opened his eyes, sat up. Then he hoisted himself erect by clutching Fremont's shoulder. "You brought me? Won't forget it. Let's see—" He slumped against the parapet, peered over. "Where's that automatic?" He had not lost sight of his mission. "Should be somewhere close. Isn't that it, Fremont? I can't see clearly."

The Legionnaire followed his indications: "Yes, Captain."

"It's all of fifty yards—too far to throw grenades. Where's the rifle grenadier?" When no one answered, the officer understood. "One of the casualties. Somebody should have thought to bring his gear along, *tromblon* and grenades."

"Killed in the yard, Captain. No one was thinking of anything much then."

"Four of you will have to go down. We might kill off a few from here, but they'd get that gun away and use it elsewhere. Fremont, pick three men."

It was death, down below. They might surprise the gunners, but the others would close in fast. Fremont saluted, nodded vaguely at the nearest men. One of the soldiers carried a coil of rope. This was made fast around a jutting stone along the crenelated crest.

"We'll help you out from here as much as we can," Jacot said as Fremont started down. The Legionnaire landed lightly, held the rope for the others.

"Eh, what dopes!" one man remarked. "They haven't spotted us yet. We could have brought artillery—"

"How often do you look behind you when you're in action?" another cut him short, with a sneer. "Those guys are all right. They think the others would tip them off."

"Get down," Fremont ordered. He fell on all fours. "Come on—"

His mind was working fast. He had a plan, a plan that would not attract much attention from those not immediately concerned. Using grenades would be foolish. Too noisy. And he knew why the snipers within had not sent out a messenger: There was the courtyard to cross, under fire of the French raiders. Some of those boys in the upper room were fine shots, and a runner would not have much chance to get as far as the gate.

The Moroccans inside were in the same plight as the raiders had been: They had had a fine plan, which had miscarried. And, in war, when a plan miscarries, it is most difficult to control subsequent events.

Halfway to the automatic's position, Fremont looked back and saw that one of the men held a grenade ready to throw. He shook his head, tapped the knife. Use the blade. The fellow grinned understanding.

The fusillade was very near now; one could perceive the occasional sharp clang of a breech snapped shut. That was all very fine—the busier they were looking the other way, the better all around.

Fremont pushed himself up on his elbows. He was very near his goal, ten or twelve feet away. There were five men in the pit, one evidently directing fire, another at the gun, one holding magazines ready. Two others sat behind that group, filling extra magazines.

The gunner was not firing steadily. He would let loose two or three questing shots, exchange some words with the man peering over the heap of dirt before the hole.

FREMONT gathered himself, then leaped. The second bound landed him inside the pit. He planted the knife in the center of the first man's back, whipped it free

and grappled with the gunner. The surprise was complete; there was little shouting. Struggling men saved their breath. Fremont got rid of his second man with an upward drive under the ribs. He distinctly felt the resistance of the coarse cloak, then the soft, greasy slide of the metal in flesh.

The others were already straightening, with tense, mirthless grins on their faces. The bodies were pushed aside. Fremont examined the weapon—Spanish. But the mechanism was not a problem for a man accustomed to firearms.

"Take a look at that—"

Fremont turned and saw one of his men pointing at an arm jutting from the piled bodies. It bore a blue and pink tattoo, interlocking hearts with 'Freida' and 'Augustus' written above and below. It was the first man killed, the one Fremont had knifed from behind. It had been Legionnaire Zurn.

"Hear you got broke from sergeant," the other fellow remarked. "They'll give you back your chevrons for this. The native intelligence people had a reward of two hundred *douros* for his head."

"A man in uniformed service can't collect, though," another declared. "Ain't that a shame?"

Fremont looked behind, to signal the men on top of the wall not to reveal their presence. And he understood why the men in the pits had not discovered them—one had to get halfway out of the deep trenches to obtain a clear view.

The rifle firing swelled in volume. Fremont propped himself up, peered down the slope. The Legionnaires were coming on again; the lull in the automatic's firing had encouraged them. At the same moment, a terrific shock made him breathless; the air screamed. When he recovered, he explained to the others: The mountain battery had had the emplacement spotted and were trying to put the automatic out of business.

A scuffling above, and a half-naked, man in a dark brown cloak dropped into the pit. He had no time to shout, no time to raise his hands. Three knives struck him at the same time.

"A runner, coming to see what was the matter here—the gun hasn't fired," Fremont suggested. "Don't let them worry, it will fire—"

He had widened the embrasure with his hands, so that he could swing the muzzle of the gun to the right, to enfilade a half dozen pits garnished with riflemen. They were some distance down the slope, probably the better to cover this place. Fremont adjusted the sights, crouched behind the automatic. A tentative squeeze of the firing lever to test the range, a bit short—and he emptied a magazine into the first hole at full speed.

"Look at that, will you! Look—"

The riflemen had been killed at their posts, so swiftly that those in the next pit had noticed nothing. They must have heard the firing of the automatic, but as it had fired from time to time all morning, they had paid no particular attention to it. Fremont corrected his aim, opened fire again full blast.

But this time, one of the occupants saw the dirt flying before his face, turned around, understood where the murderous volley came from. He was out of the hole in a flash, racing for the next one, howling. Fremont sought to bring him down, but he dove headlong into the pit, and all the others ducked from sight.

Meanwhile, one hundred and fifty yards of the defense line was completely out of action. Well trained troops are quick to sense anything of the sort, and the Legionnaires came galloping into the safety zone.

They were so near that the artillery had suspended fire. Their first grenades started to burst very close, and one of the men with Fremont lifted himself into the open, hands raised, shouting: "Friends! France!" and the Legion sections swerved, doubled toward the gateway of the fortress.

"Take this over," Fremont ordered the man next to him.

He emerged from cover, ran after the Legionnaires. Brief as his delay had been, the portals had been blown in, the Legionnaires were under the arcades, spilling into the yard. Fremont caught an officer by the arm.

"No grenades on the right—building held by special group!"

The other tore loose and ran on without looking at him. It was Hallez, his

own lieutenant. Fremont sought for a man with a red cross arm-band, located one. "There's a wounded officer up on the wall. Come along, I'll show you—"

He was four or five minutes locating Jacot. Then he descended to the ground again. There was fighting throughout the buildings. The natives trapped within by the unexpectedly quick final rush of the soldiers had no thought of surrender. According to their tradition, when there was a battle, a man won, escaped or was killed. It is unlikely that after finding the yard strewn with French troopers' bodies, the Legionnaires offered them much opportunity to yield alive.

DETONATIONS echoed under the vaulted passages. Bodies were tossed to the yard from terraces. Captain de Kolloch was standing in full sight in the center of that yard, directing operations. When his ex-sergeant addressed him, he turned calmly, then started.

"Fremont—"

"At your service, Captain."

"Thought you dead." De Kolloch interrupted himself to shout orders, indicating with the light bamboo cane he carried in his gloved left hand. Then he turned to Fremont again. "Chaps in building said you dead. Fallen off wall, or such silly rot. You perfectly alive. Guarnec thinks you dead. Absolutely crazed. Weeping. Really, weeping. Stubborn man, fine soldier. Shall cite him."

"Where is he?"

"With Third Section." The cane lifted, straightened. "That way. Third Section, eastern wing, eastern guard-path. Careful—still fighting."

Fremont ran into the building. The stairways were swarming with men, slippery with blood. Isolated shots still thudded in some of the rooms, as hidden natives were discovered and dispatched.

"Third Section? Guarnec?"

"Over there. Don't know—first right turn—"

Fremont raced from one hall to another, in and out of rooms turned into shambles, shouting the same questions. Some obscure instinct spurred him—he must find Guarnec before harm came to him!

Forgotten were the events of the past few days, the fight, the special group and the adventures of the morning. His comrade, his brother, was grieving for him, crazy with rage at his death. Scattered corpses in a room, and a single Legonnaire there, a German kid, not nineteen, who had rested his bayonetted rifle, blade dripping blood, against a wall and was being comfortably sick.

"Guarnec?"

"In there." The boy recognized him and added: "Sergeant."

Fremont hurtled through a door, stumbled over a body. There were others, scattered on the thick rugs.

In an angle, seated on a leather cushion, elbows on knees, face between his hands, was Legionnaire Guarnec, Yves-Marie-Joseph. He was moaning and weeping. His rifle, with a broken butt and a twisted bayonet, was on the floor, and his thick-soled boots rested in a pool of blood. It was he who had laid this room waste, slain the people in it, in one of his magnificent rages.

HE LOOKED up as he heard Fremont approach.

"Hello, kid," he said. "You here so soon?" He seemed dazed as he said that, Fremont was to recall. "You're here, but nothing has changed."

He wiped his cheeks with the back of his hand, then offered his fingers for the shake. His grip was nerveless.

"They told me you'd heard I was dead—"

"Oh. You aren't? I understand. One of the guys who was with you said he had seen you popped off the rampart, fall down."

"Somebody else."

"I guess so." Guarnec was silent for a time. "I wanted to see you, tell you I used a dirty trick to lick you. Maybe you're good; maybe I'm not what I was. But straight fighting, you were getting me. Captain Hirschauer called me in, when they let me out of the can, and he talked to me tough. Showed me where I'd been a slob, a hog. I think he's cockeyed, kid. But if it looks that way to anybody, I agreed to cut it out."

Fremont leaned down and put his arm

around the gloomy man's shoulders.

"Don't worry, Yves. There's no harm done. If I want to go back into the company, I can. I got Zurn. That should be good for something. I suppose I looked like a conceited fool, with my chevrons and my worry. I lost them, and I didn't die. Listen, I'll take you around to my new captain, Jacot. We'll be together awhile, that way. And after—" Fremont faltered: After? It would be the same thing all over again. What was he going to do? Ask Guarnec to be his orderly?

"After nothing," Guarnec said shortly. "There'll be no after."

"Why?"

"That guy, over there, with the funny knife—" Guarnec indicated one of the bodies, a lanky, white-bearded warrior, who still held in his hand what Fremont recognized as *yataghan,* an antique. "He was spry for such an old duck, and he sure could use that slicer. My butt was already bursted, so I guess I was kind of clumsy, too. I give him a low jab, to bring that guard down, then straight. I got him, but he got me."

"Bad?"

Guarnec chuckled mirthlessly.

"Ripped me from the groin to the navel. A kid Legionnaire who came in stuffed bandages into my pants and put my sash over it. Then he went to get a doctor. But it's no use, when I stand up, my guts will drop out. The blood's leaking through. Look at it—"

He indicated the floor. Fremont shuddered, realized what had made the young soldier so white, so ill.

"They fix those wounds now," he said, nevertheless.

"Not this one, they won't," Guarnec said simply. "Stick around until the doctor comes, eh?"

"I'll stay with you." Fremont started.

"Sure, I get it." Guarnec nodded. "Won't be so long, at that. I feel a little foolish though, about the guy being old." He looked up into Fremont's face, and his voice changed. "Listen, kid, don't let this throw you. I'm getting a break, getting a chance to talk. I was praying for that, just a chance to talk. To you. You be a good guy, like Hirschauer. That fellow knows what's what. De Kolloch is all right, but he's like—like a floorwalker. I'm thirsty, but I better not drink. Got any cigarettes?"

Fremont put one between his pale lips, lighted it.

"There isn't much more to say. I thought there was a lot more. You're all right, kid." Guarnec, whose hours were numbered, Guarnec, who was to die, looked thoughtfully at the tip of his cigarette, and resumed in his normal voice: "You should never have fallen for that trick. When a guy falls, watch if he protects his face when he drops. If he does, watch out—"

Fremont sat on the floor, smoking, and listening intently. You must take these things calmly, Guarnec had taught him long ago. If your heart was wrenched, you joked: It would be all one a century ahead. Meanwhile, if this was the way Guarnec wanted it, thus would it be. For the big man had nothing to will away, nothing—save his knowledge of fighting.

"Get it, kid?"

"Sure. Go on, Guarnec!"

Mile after mile he kept staggering on, toward—where?

THE DARK TRAIL

By ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

JULES AUBERT heard them coming—mounted men a-gallop through the woods.

"They are here, Jean!" he cried. Althought Jules was fifty years old and a hickory-tough *courier-de-bois,* a boyish excitement now lifted his voice.

Jean, his trapper son, came bounding from the cabin. Jean was twenty-five, barrel-chested and all knots.

"We shall preten' to be surprise, *mon pere,*" he warned jubilantly. "Lak we do not know they come to bring the fine gift for Jules Aubert."

Yet even with an expanse of overflowing beard Jules Aubert quite failed to conceal the eagerness of his anticipation.

Two visitors burst forth, then, from a wall of spruce timber. With red coats gleaming in the spring sunshine, they came charging up to the cabin.

"Cheerio, Jules, you old porcupine."

"What about boilin' the kettle, Jean, for a couple o' starved troopers?"

Corporal Steve and Constable Dave pulled up, dismounting flashily.

"You are vair' welcome, *mes amis,*" Jules greeted.

Jean, because no fine gift was in evidence, tried not to look disappointed. Was it only a silly rumor, after all, that Troop D down at Lake of the Pines had passed the hat to buy an expensive token of esteem for Jules Aubert?

"We were out lookin' for a new lead on that old Haggerty case," said Constable Dave, "but we're stymied. So we thought we'd just stop by for a cup of—"

"If you're gonna make that speech, Dave," Corporal Steve broke in gruffly, "get along with it."

Dave grinned. He tipped his service Stetson back on his head, loosened the diagonal strap of his Sam Browne, unbuttoned his crimson blouse and drew a paper from his inner pocket.

"We," he began reading, "the duly appointed emissaries of Troop D, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, do hereby—"

"He has to read it!" Steve cut in. "After sitting up all night memorizin' this piece—"

"Do hereby," Dave stubbornly proceeded, "desire to express our 'preciation, amity and profound gratitude for one Jules Aubert. The same Jules Aubert who for twenty years was a courier on the force. Who kept us on many a dark trail. Who made us look good plenty of times when we'd 've looked bad without him. Who headed off that Cree uprising ten years ago with a record mush two hundred miles over snow and ice. Who broke through a forest fire last year to—"

"To save the whole settlement at Musk Ox Lake," Steve cut in.

"Hey there, who's making this speech, anyway?"

Steve brushed Dave aside and finished it himself.

"That was your last trail, Jules, old scout. So we're squarin' it with you, best we can. The boys of Troop D made a pot and—"

"You make vair' happy," murmured Jules. He couldn't see these good friends. Ever since that wall of flame at Musk Ox Lake, all trails had been dark for Jules Aubert.

"Shoo!" whispered Jean at his elbow. "Preten' lak you surprise, *mon pere*."

Corporal Steve, turning, raised his voice. "Righto, Buck, fetch him along."

A third uniformed Mountie, Buck Newberry by name, appeared on foot from the woods. His left hand was leading his horse, while his right led a dog on leash. The dog was a magnificent German shepherd.

"A Seeing Eye dog," Dave announced, " 'specially bred and trained for a man who needs one, Jules."

"His name," Steve supplied, "is Sergeant-Major."

"Ah!" exclaimed Jean. "He is so beautiful, Jules. So beeg and strong, lak a fat wolf!"

"Weighs ninety pounds," Dave boasted. "And twenty-six inches high at the shoulder. A champion of champions, Jules. They say his trainers used to take him to the thickest traffic in New York. They'd blindfold a bloke and the serg'd lead him across any boulevard in town."

Excitement all but choked Jules. The dog was by his knees now. He put out a hand and touched soft, thick fur. "The *bon Dieu* be thank! He is mine? I can go through the woods now, just lak I see?"

"Not yet," Steve cautioned. "You'll need practise, Jules. You and the Serg got to train yourselves as a team. Keep him by you day and night. Don't worry. The serg'll catch on, all right."

"We ain't doin' this exactly cricket," Dave admitted. He went on to explain that usually a sightless man had to go all the way to the training kennels at Morristown, New Jersey, and there become acquainted with his Seeing Eye and take schooling under expert instructors. "But our pot wasn't big enough for that, Jules, old tomato, so you and the serg'll have to do the best you can right here."

Jules, caressing the dog's back, groped forward and felt leather.

"It's his workin' harness," Dave said. "Here's the handle." He put Jules' hand in a loop of the harness.

A thrill shot through Jules as he felt the dog's flank press warmly against his knee.

"Sarjong!" he murmured. "We shall go all place together, *mon cher ami*."

The dog, a bit nervous until now by

strange sights and smells, began relaxing. He squatted by Jules' leg, long red tongue panting rhythmically after the gallop from Lake of the Pines. He looked about him, taking stock. Definitely he was affronted by the odor of certain hides plastered against the cabin wall. But these men seemed all right. They were admiring him. Sergeant-Major liked to be admired. He was naturally vain of his bigness, of his perfect proportions, of the coal black saddle of fur blending into tannish legs, of a reddish brown ruff tipped with silver gray and the gloss of his fawn-colored chest, of his straight-up, expectant ears, of brilliant red-brown eyes a-sparkle with intelligence.

The serg knew his points, and here were men who knew them too.

All but one. The serg looked up into the face of this one and saw sightless sockets. Of course! His masters were always that way. It was what made him love them. It was what made him part of them. To lead, to guide, that was his destiny. A faltering step keeping pace with his own. A dependent hand gripping his harness. Helplessness at his shoulder—what more could a dog want?

Corporal Steve tossed a booklet to Jean Aubert. The title of it was: "Dogs Against Darkness." "It's got all the instructions, Jean. Read 'em aloud to Jules. Main thing is for the serg to know Jules is his master."

"Don't kid yourself," Dave grinned. "He knows it already."

The serg had turned and his tongue was licking Jules' hand.

"Sarjong!" Jules purred adoringly.

He took a groping step forward. Instantly Sergeant-Major matched that step. Jules took another one. The serg matched it, his flank pressed firmly against the groper's knee.

"I learn fast, yes?" cried Jules joyously.

The troopers cheered.

TAMARACK CREEK, feeding a chain of narrow lakes, ran close by the Aubert cabin. The terrain beyond was swampy and untenanted. Only by selecting a region of extreme isolation could Jean Aubert hope to find good trapping.

Harry Catterson, by following Tamarack Creek, managed to locate the Aubert clearing. He stopped cautiously at the rim of it. The sight of redcoats startled him. Catterson retreated into the timber, nerves pumping. Then he climbed a tree.

Detroit was Catterson's stamping ground. Only once before had he ventured this high and deep into the Canada woods.

His purpose now was to confirm a fact about Jules Aubert. Slung to a strap about Catterson's shoulders was a pair of binoculars.

These, from a tree top, he trained upon the life congregated in the Aubert clearing. He saw five men, three horses, one dog.

Catterson ignored all of them but Jules Aubert. Jules was practising steps beside the dog.

They were awkward, stumbling steps. The other men stood by to applaud and to shout advice.

Watching carefully, Catterson soon felt immeasurable relief. Jules Aubert was blind. There couldn't be the slightest doubt. Catterson had read in a Detroit paper about a courier named Jules Aubert who lost his sight in a forest fire. But it was a thing he had to make sure of.

He couldn't trust rumors or risk the possibility of journalistic exaggeration. Not with his neck at stake.

When he was absolutely sure, he slipped down from the tree. What a break!

No use to be jittery now. He'd be safe even if he walked boldly in among those redcoats.

They hadn't, Catterson knew, the faintest notion about the Haggerty murder two years ago, except that it had been witnessed by Jules Aubert.

They had no notion of its motive. They knew only what Jules must have told them: that Jules had seen one stranger kill another one and then make off on horseback through the woods.

Catterson retreated up-creek to where he had left his pack. Strapping it on his back, he began hiking northwester-

ly. There'd be trouble finding the right spot, he admitted, but he could take his own sweet time now. If anyone stumbled on him he could say he was cruising timber, or hunting butterflies, or roughing it for his health. Made no difference even if they picked him up on suspicion, tried him for the Haggerty murder on a hunch, and brought in Jules Aubert as a witness. What good was a witness who couldn't see?

CATTERSON tramped on and in two hours came to a shallow brook. There he pitched his pup tent. He was equipped also with fishing tackle and a shotgun. The shotgun was a light, boy-size piece, a sixteen-gauge. Between sundown and dark Catterson bagged three partridges.

Relaxing in his pup tent that night, he reviewed his position in detail to see if any hazard had been overlooked. The looting of a trading post, with Haggerty, and the getaway with seven thousand dollars. They'd left no clews there. Lakes and rivers had given up no trail. The swapping of the canoe to a Cree Indian for a packhorse. The continued flight toward a safe hideout of Haggerty's in Alberta.

Finally the camp at the base of a twin tamarack not more than a mile, Catterson was sure, from where he lay now. As a precaution against being surprised and searched by intruders, the fugitives had always hidden the loot before going to sleep at night. On this night they had stowed it in a knothole of the twin tamarack.

Then, next morning, while Haggerty was cinching the pack-horse, murder! One quick shot. Why split with a tramp like Haggerty?

How could Catterson have guessed that Jules Aubert had from a distance seen the smoke of a breakfast fire? And that Jules Aubert, perhaps curious, perhaps suspicious of fur poachers, had approached in time to witness the crime!

His cry of protest had made Catterson whirl about. For a moment they had stood face to face. Then Catterson had jumped to the back of the pack-horse, making off in a panic. And the courier, a-foot, had been soon out-distanced.

Safety in Detroit, where Cat Catterson could read all about the hue and cry in Canada. A picture of Jules Aubert, with a detailed account of his report to the force. No mention of any loot. No suspected connection with the raiding of a trading post far to the northeast. Only the killing of one stranger by another, with Jules Aubert competent to identify the killer.

For two years, then, discretion had ruled Catterson. He'd kept out of Canada. Let the loot stay there till it rotted. Why risk being picked up by the Mounties, and being stood face to face with Jules Aubert?

Then a tip, today confirmed, that Aubert was blind. Catterson could relax now. Nothing to do but scout around for that twin tamarack, and there help himself to seven thousand dollars.

Trouble was, the landmarks were a bit hazy in his memory. He remembered an outcrop of rock on one side and a sumac copse on the other. Haggerty had set four stones in a square for that campfire, and they'd picked some blackberries from nearby briars. Give him time and he'd find the place, thought Catterson.

He fell asleep. At dawn he was up and made breakfast. Nice break that Haggerty had taught him a few tricks of camping.

With his pup tent as a hub, he began scouting in circles. Soon he found a twin tamarack, but with no outcrop of rock nearby it. He widened his circles, failing all day to find the right place.

At sundown Catterson returned to his camp. Amazing how many twin tamaracks there were in these woods. No hurry about it, though. He'd find the right one if it took all summer.

Game was plentiful. Catterson made a shelter of spurce boughs in case of rain.

Each day he resumed his search for a spot marked X—where he had camped that fatal night with Haggerty.

WHILE Catterson groped in one strange world, Jules Aubert was groping with growing delight in another.

Shackles of blindness were falling from

Jules. Each new day, at practise with his Seeing Eye, he made progress. Jean, with no trapping to occupy him this summer season, sat on the cabin stoop to coach and to praise.

Each night Jean read aloud to Jules from the booklet, "Dogs Against Darkness." How to use the guide words, "Right," "Left," "Forward." How to keep the dog's hip against the man's left leg, with the dog's head always about two and a half feet in the lead. How to interpret every slight hesitation of the guide's pace. How to sense hazards to right or left by the turning of the dog's head; a hazard directly in front when the dog held back. How to know that the trail ahead bends when the dog slows his step.

"The book say," Jean said one evening, "how you can mak heem go where you want. Lak you say, 'Go to the drugstore, Sarjong'. Then I tak both of you to drugstore. Two-three tam we do this, then Sarjong tak you there all by heemself."

There wasn't any drugstore. But there was a creek, a lake, a fur path and the beginning of a trail to Lake of the Pines.

"Go to the Lake, Sarjong." At this command from Jules, Jean led them both to a favorite fishing rock at the upper lake. After many repetitions, Sergeant-Major at the right command would always guide Jules to that spot. Often Jules fished there all day, each thrill of a caught trout being shared by the dog.

In the same way Jules soon went at will to the creek. Once he tried to ford in deep water, but the Serg held back. Jules, tapping with a cane in his free hand, followed the creek to a shallow riffle.

A pressure of his knee and the command "Left" induced Sergeant to turn into the riffles there. Jules followed and they forded the stream knee deep.

Remarkable examples read from the booklet by Jean, of Seeing Eye smartness under menacing obstacles, each day inspired Jules to new and daring ventures.

Soon he could make Sergeant lead him over a log which bridged the brook, or far out on the fur path which followed Jean's trap line.

"We tak the Lake of Pines trail, Sarjong." At this command dog and master would proceed a little way along the trail which led toward the Mounted Police barracks twenty miles south.

Each day through the summer Jules Aubert ventured further.

"What you theenk, Jean?" Jules cried in glee one evening. "We have go half way to Lake of Pines."

"Some tam," Jean encouraged proudly, "Maybe you go all the way there."

"By gar!" exclaimed Jules. "You hear that, Sarjong?"

It became a grand goal for them. To confound and delight their friends of Troop D, some fine day, by appearing without assistance from Jean at Lake of the Pines. It meant pushing through twenty miles of swamps and brushy tangles.

"But what do we care?" cried Jules. "Poof! We go any place now, me an' Sarjong!"

AUGUST waned, to find Harry Catterson all but discouraged. He was still searching vainly for a lost cache in the woods. Snow would be flying soon. Winter would drive him out and cheat him of the loot.

His supplies were gone. He was haggard, in rags, and yet loathe to give up. These infernal tamarack glades were all too much alike. Constantly they confused him. He wasn't born to the woods, like Jules Aubert.

Jules Aubert! Twice during the summer the blind man and his dog had passed within sight of Catterson. Aubert, apparently, could go anywhere with that dog. Aubert, who couldn't see a human face—and yet who knew these woods like a book!

An idea came to Catterson. He took from his pack an old .38 revolver. This he laid in a mud puddle where in a few days it would rust.

Then, on a frosty morning early in September, he rolled his pack and treked boldly to the Aubert cabin. The barking of Sergeant-Major announced him to Jules and Jean.

Jean saw a thin, trampish man with a pack and a boy-size shotgun.

"My name's Catterson," the visitor announced. "Been campin' near here all summer. Thought I'd drop in and be neighborly."

He stood face to face with Jules, eyewitness of his crime. It took nerve, but Catterson had it.

"You come right in mak yourself home," Jean invited cordially.

"Thanks." Catterson entered the cabin. The smiles of his hosts were reassuring. After all, there was no risk. Jules Aubert couldn't see and had never before heard his voice.

Jean served strong black tea. "What maybe you do up here, my frien'?"

"Oh, just up here for my health," said Catterson. "Had a breakdown. The doc prescribed a summer in the north woods, see? But bein' broke I had to rough it. Look like it, don't I?" He grimaced at his thorn-torn corduroys.

Visitors were rare, and so all the more welcome at this cabin. To Catterson, only the reddish brown eyes of a dog seemed uncordial.

From the outset Sergeant-Major looked coldly upon Catterson. Here was a stranger competing for his master's attention. The Sergeant resented this. He kept sullenly aloof while Jules strummed on a banjo and sang old songs of the portages for Catterson's cheer.

Dark came, coolish and misty. Catterson coughed.

"What about puttin' me up for a few days?" he suggested. "Maybe I could make myself useful."

"You stay long as you lak, *M'sieu,*" said Jules.

Catterson unrolled his bedroll on the floor. In the morning he went out and chopped wood.

Artfully he inserted himself into the confidence of both men. He mustn't force things, though, or they'd get the wind up. Simple yokels. Just like big bearish dogs, thought Catterson, only you had to rub them the right way.

Jean, aside from hospitality, had a material reason for welcoming any honest, able-bodied guest. It gave Jean more freedom for certain long-postponed chores of his own.

"Maybe you keep Jules company while I mak one leetle *voyage,*" Jean suggested.

"A trip? Where?" asked Catterson.

"I ain't sell last winter fur yet. The market she ain't been so good."

"He mean," Jules corrected, "that he have be 'fraid to leave me alone here long tam."

The trading post at which Jean usually disposed of his furs was eighty miles south. A round trip would take Jean six days.

"Go right ahead," the guest urged. "I'll take care of Jules."

EARLY the next morning Jean set off with a pack of his best furs. When he was gone Catterson said to Jules: "Guess I'll take my popgun and go out after partridges."

He went out with the shotgun. At a certain mud puddle he retrieved a .38 revolver. The gun was well rusted now. Catterson put it in his pocket thoughtfully and at sundown returned to the cabin.

"By the way," he asked carelessly during supper, "did either you or Jean lose a gun lately?"

"What kind gun?" queried Jules.

"A six-gun. I found one in the woods today, maybe seven or eight miles nor'-west o' here."

Jules became alert. Such a location couldn't be far from the site of the Haggerty murder two years ago. His own failure in that instance had ever since preyed upon Jules.

"By gar, these gun, is she a beeg forty-five?" By a bullet found in the victim, the calibre of the murder gun was known.

Catterson shrugged. "Didn't notice. It's still layin' there, all rusty. I ain't much of a hand to pick up other folks' guns. Never can tell when they'll get you in trouble."

"By gar!" repeated Jules. Here, he thought, might be a chance for a good turn to Troop D. In a murder case nothing was of more importance than the gun.

"What this place look lak, where you see these gun?"

Catterson described the place vaguely. "I was stalkin' some partridge that ran into blackberry briar. Seems to me there was a big double tamarack close by, and some sumac. Abouta two-three hour hike nor'west of here, I'd say."

"Ah!" exclaimed Jules. "I bet she is same place."

"What same place?"

Jules answered by giving facts about the Haggerty crime. It looked as though the killer had either dropped his gun on the spot, to be rid of its incrimination, or else had thrown it away soon after taking flight.

Catterson let himself be impressed. "If it's a .45, I'll bet it's that murder gun all right."

"So we better mak sure," insisted Jules.

"Anything you say, brother," agreed Catterson. He doubted if he could find the place again, though. Could Jules?

Jules pondered this. During the first weeks after the crime he had guided police there many times. Now, blind, he could hardly return to the spot by himself.

Nor even with the dog, for that particular spot in the woods had no significance for Sergeant-Major. It was on no trail.

"But I think maybe three of us can go there," said Jules. "Tomorrow we try."

They were off with an early start.

"The trapline, Sarjong," directed Jules.

He gripped the dog's harness and Sergeant-Major walked to the beginning of Jean's well-trod fur path. Jules kept at his flank. Catterson came along behind.

"If these gun is beeg forty-five," exclaimed Jules, "we tak her to police."

Catterson's lip drooped derisively. The gun being an innocent .38, he was perfectly safe. He had rusted the gun simply to wash the whole incident off the record, if it came to a showdown, and at the same time make his story to Jules convincing.

A branch of spring water crossed the fur path. Jules counted running waters until he came to the third flow.

"Left, Sarjong." The dog turned up this third spring branch.

Here Jules needed help from Catterson.

"Tell me, *m'sieu,* when we are at beeg rock with moss and three leetle sugar maple close by."

From memory Jules knew all details of this country. His life had been lived here, hunting, fishing, trapping, and as courier for the mounted police. And until this last year, no eyes in all the region had been keener than Jules Aubert's.

Twenty minutes up the rivulet and Catterson said: "Here we are, Jules. A mossy rock and some sugar maples."

"Here," said Jules, "is where the deer come to dreenk when the sun go down. Look close, *m'sieu.* You see a game path lead off nor'west?"

The game trail was so faint that Catterson had trouble seeing it. It led away from the other bank of the branch. When they were on it Jules said, "Forwar', Sarjong."

Off through a brushy tangle, then. The Sergeant, taught to keep on trails, followed this one.

"You stop us, *m'sieu,*" said Jules, "when the ground is no longer black. When she is red clay, we turn."

They came to red clay. "Right, Sarjong."

To the right for a short way it was guesswork. "A pine reedge is ahead, *m'sieu.* Yes? You see gap in trees near top? We go there."

SLOWLY they climbed the ridge. At the summit Jules chose to follow the backbone. At the second saddle he veered down the other slope. "We shall come to leetle lake with many willows, *m'sieu.*"

They came to a small lake, circled it to a brook entering. Up the brook a mile to a windfall spruce which spanned it. Another game trail from there.

The uncanniness of it awed Catterson. Here was he, a murderer, being guided back by a blind man to the scene of his crime. In a little while now, face to face with the very witness who but for lack of vision could send him to the

gallows, he'd be plucking that loot from a knothole.

A swamp. Jules went down its outflowing brook to a beaver dam. Then to the right and upgrade to an outcropping of gravel. "You will climb a tree, *m'sieu*, and look nor'west. If you see a tall pine snag where the lightning have strike, we are near the place."

Cat Catterson shinned up the tree. He saw the snag and exulted. Forty yards beyond it reared a giant, double tamarack.

"Straight ahead," Catterson reported as he slid to the ground.

They advanced to the snag and on to the twin tamarack. Every landmark was there: the blackberry briars, sumac, the outcrop of rock, the four stones of an old camp-fire. Most important, Catterson could see a knothole head high in a fork of the tamarack.

"Is here where you find these gun?" questioned Jules.

"Nope. This ain't the place, Jules."

Jules was disappointed. "Maybe you better look 'round to mak sure, *m'sieu*."

Catterson, advancing to the knothole, stopped halfway. That infernal dog was eyeing him. The steady canine stare worried Catterson. It gave him a queer feeling to retrieve the loot under inspection, even if the observer were only a dog.

But the dog was dumb. Only Jules counted, and Jules couldn't see. Or could he? To make once more certain, Catterson returned to Jules and borrowed tobacco for his pipe. He stoked the pipe, then struck a match. He waved the flaming match directly before Jules' face. There was no reaction. Catterson was satisfied. The man was positively blind.

Catterson then went boldly to the tree, reached a hand into the knothole. Yes, the package was there. Catterson brought out seven thousand dollars wrapped in an oilskin. He stowed it in his pocket, then pretended to look for a rusty gun.

"It's no use, Jules. This ain't the spot. We might as well go home."

Jules gave a sigh. "We go home, Sarjong."

Going home didn't need any zigzag routing. The Sergeant, with Jules at his flank, took a beeline for the Aubert clearing. Catterson trailed along, grinning. He was through with this fellow now.

Still, it might arouse suspicion if he deserted Jules before the return of Jean. Safest to stick around till then. In that case the entire business would pass unchallenged.

"But we must tell police about these gun," insisted Jules.

Catterson was expecting that. And quite definitely he didn't want the slumbering Haggerty case all stirred up by the report of a rusty gun. Thing to do was to wash that clew up here and now.

They were two miles toward home when Catterson exclaimed: "Hold on—this looks like the place where I flushed birds yesterday."

"Where you see these gun?"

"I think so. Yeah, I was by here all right. There's an empty shotgun shell where I banged away at that covey." Catterson stooped, pretending to pick up something from the ground.

Actually he produced it from his pocket. He handed it to Jules. By the feel Jules could tell that it was an empty shotgun shell, small gauge.

"And now," offered Catterson, "maybe I can locate that gun."

With a tongue in his cheek he began beating around. "By gosh, here she is, Jules." Again Catterson pretended to pick up something which actually he produced from his pocket.

Only the seeing eye of a German Shepherd saw this deceit.

The sensitive fingers of Jules were feeling of the bore and the weight of a rusty .38. "It ees not the beeg gun, like forty-five, *m'sieu*."

"Nope, she's a thirty-eight, Jules. Which means it ain't tied up after all."

JULES was still fingering the gun. The metal was rough and a bit scaly, as though rusted. But it seemed slightly too warm. Only a blind man, used to relying on touch, would have noted this. Why wasn't the gun cold and

damp? Lying here in the woods for a year, or even for a single night, the metal should have a clammy feel to his hand.

Jules stooped and picked up a pebble. The pebble was cold, damp and had an earthy smell.

Catterson, standing by, saw Jules sniff at the rusty .38 gun. "It smell," Jules said slowly, "lak tobacco in your pocket, *m'sieu.*"

"The hell it does!"

Startled and confused, Catterson saw Jules grope to the nearest tree. He saw Jules feel of the bark, then move to other nearby trees. "No tamarack or sumac here, *m'sieu.* Only spruce."

Catterson flushed.

"Well, wanta make anything out of it?" he challenged.

"Only, *m'sieu,* that you tell me plenty beeg lies," said Jules.

Catterson took an angry step forward. But a low growl made him stop. Hair of Sergeant-Major's ruff bristled and fangs bared warningly.

"You're crazy!" cried Catterson. "Why would I lie to you?"

The strain of defense in his voice wasn't missed by Jules. Catterson had tricked him, he knew. And yet Jules was too discreet to betray further suspicion.

"Maybe I mak mistak, *m'sieu.* Home, Sarjong." With the dog leading him, Jules proceeded on homeward. Catterson followed, his self-assurance routed now, and fully aware that Jules no longer trusted him.

Arriving at the cabin, the look of doubt was still on Jules' face. It was there all during supper; and Catterson, as his nerves grew tauter, knew that he'd better not risk standing pat until the return of Jean. He could complain of a toothache, and with that excuse pull out at daybreak for the settlements.

Jules did not take up his banjo, tonight, to sing old songs of the *portageurs.* He kept close to his dog. And the eyes of the dog followed Catterson wherever he moved about the room.

When the oil lamp was out and both men were abed, Catterson could sense wakefulness at the other bunk. No deep breathing of sleep, there. No sound at all except a faint ticking from Catterson's watch, which he had laid, before retiring, on the bunkside table.

The darkness made both men equal. Catterson, for the moment, was as blind as Jules. Yet he could feel alertness. They were both awake, the man and the dog. The dog was watching, the man was thinking. It frightened Catterson. For a pillow, tonight, he was using his rolled coat with loot still stuffed in it. The money, he had made sure, was all there. Now his hand reached out for the shotgun and brought it into his bunk.

If it came to a showdown, this shotgun would be the answer. Anything to save his neck. He could deal with man and dog as he had dealt with Haggerty. Yet the thought was terrifying. If Jules were found dead in this cabin, the guilt would be stark and clear. Mounted police would comb the earth for a man left here with Jules Aubert.

The border? Even the border wouldn't stop those Mounties, should they find a blind man here murdered.

Toward midnight a patter began falling on the cabin roof. Then thunder cracked over the forest. Catterson shivered. He felt under his head. The loot-stuffed coat was still there.

"Rainin', ain't it?" he asked hoarsely aloud.

There was no answer. Even the faint ticking of his watch had stopped now. He'd forgotten to wind it. The rain was pelting hard. Catterson squirmed in his blankets, fretting, still sensing wakefulness at the other bunk.

Just before daylight he fell asleep.

An hour later he awakened to see light seeping through a window. Instantly Catterson felt of his pillowed coat. The money was there.

"Got a toothache," he grouched. "Think I'll hike for town."

Again no answer. Then Catterson saw that the opposite bunk was empty. Jules Aubert was not in the cabin.

Gone! Where? To the Mounties at Lake of the Pines?

CATTERSON went to the door, looked out. Only a mist was falling now. But the ground had softened and Catterson saw imprints. The tracks of a

man and dog led directly across the clearing to the Lake of Pines trail.

To the police! Why? With what knowledge of guilt had this blind man arisen stealthily at dawn, to slip away and carry tales to the Mounties?

Catterson had no idea, and for that very reason was all the more panicky. Goose-flesh stood out on him. The direst of imaginings tumbled through his brain.

His precious neck! Its only hazard was a blind man groping twenty miles through a wilderness to the law. He'll never get there, Catterson swore.

He drew on his boots, boiled coffee and wolfed a breakfast. Then he rolled his pack, with the money concealed in the core of it. He took up the sixteen-gauge shotgun and then, pack on back, set out in pursuit of Jules.

Blind man and dog, he knew, had to proceed at a slow, cautious pace. Easy enough to catch up with them. Catterson hurried on. There wasn't much of a trail. Innumerable obstacles lay across it—fallen logs, pools, creeks, boulders and bayous. Except for blazes on trees Catterson couldn't have followed it at all.

Pushing on, he at last sighted Jules Aubert. The man behind pumped a shell into his shotgun.

Not that he need shoot Jules. That would be murder. But it's not murder, reasoned Catterson, if you shoot only a dog. They can't hang you for that! If they ever catch you, you can say you were popping away at a quail. Lots of hunters, by mistake, have killed dogs.

He wouldn't touch Jules. He wouldn't even accost Jules. All he need do, to stop this blind man, was to destroy his Seeing Eye.

Catterson now left the trail and made a wide detour. About halfway to Lake of Pines would be best, he reasoned. Ten miles from either terminus would make chances minimum for Jules, groping in darkness, to reach either end of it.

Let this witness grope for three days or longer! In two days he, Catterson, could follow the needle of his pocket compass due south to rails.

Circling far in advance of Jules, Catterson came again to blazes on trees. He took ambush behind a boulder about thirty yards from the trail.

In a while he heard them coming. Peering out, Catterson saw a man, a dog. The dog's head was three feet in advance of the man's leg. Catterson aimed at the head. With a shotgun he couldn't miss.

The dog stopped, ruff bristling, as he sensed a presence near.

The shotgun boomed. Catterson saw the dog's forelegs buckle, heard a piteous yelping, saw the guide crumple at the feet of his master.

He saw Jules drop to his knees and take a bloody head in his arms. A rash of sweat colder than barbed icicles stung Catterson as he went crashing away through the woods. Not murder! Only a dog, his brain shrilled. Only a blind man's Seeing Eye.

The whimpers of Sergeant-Major stopped and he lay still. But Jules could feel a heart still faintly beating.

"You will not die, Sarjong!" he pleaded. "You are strong, lak the beeg timber wolf, *mon brave*. They cannot keel you with these bird shot, no?"

His sensitive hands explored the wounds. Both forelegs were riddled. A dozen tiny punctures in shoulder and neck. The dog could not stand. But no shot seemed to have drilled heart or brain.

The Serg might live, if only Jules could get him to Lake of Pines.

Ten miles on a dark trail, but it *must* be done. Jules picked Sergeant up in his arms, cradling him like a child. Jules Aubert was no weakling. Many times, in the old days, he had packed his two hundred pounds of flour over the hardest portages of the north.

Now he took a groping step down the trail. Another. After a dozen steps he stumbled and fell.

He was up again, staggering on. At least he could find water. After a night of rain there'd be pools everywhere. He bumped into an obstructing log. With ninety pounds in his arms Jules circled it.

He groped for the trail. But at this spot it was too faint. Water! He must bathe and bind these wounds.

STEP by step Jules kept on. Not on the trail but close by it, he hoped. A drizzle of rain still fell. If he could only feel the morning sun on his left cheek he could know south.

He bumped a tree, turned, in a moment was enmeshed in briars. He floundered through them. Feeble life was still in his arms. Desperately Jules struggled on until his boot splashed water.

He sank down there to rest and to give first aid. Cooing tenderly over Sergeant, he took off his shirt and tore it into strips. These he bound in tight bandages about the forelegs, the neck and the shoulders.

Then on again, groping, stumbling, blundering through the woods.

Obstacles bruised him. A thousand thorns clawed at his face. But nothing could stop him now. Again his foot splashed, this time in living water. Jules forded it with the dog in his arms. Knee deep, thigh deep, waist deep. Then shallows. Jules stepped out on the far bank. Porcupine Creek, he knew. But it led only to a lonely pond and in no wise toward Lake of the Pines.

So he struggled on through timber. Hour after hour, fighting each inch. It was a race with death, he knew. Life or death for Sarjong. It was a race, too, with a murderer's flight. Two days for the man to make a railhead, Jules estimated. One more day by rail to the border. Three days in all. If only Jules could start telegraphs clicking in three days, the Mounties could stop Catterson at the border.

Night came. Jules knew it only by the chill. Mile after weary mile he kept staggering on, toward—where?

He didn't know. Yet he must keep going. No food here. Freezing and starvation unless he found helping hands.

All through that first night, resting at each pool, Jules kept fighting onward. Once the dog lapped weakly at water. Most of the time he lay sluggishly in Jule's arms. By morning life was still there, though. Jules knew morning only because a bluejay scolded echoes to his shouting. There was no other answer. He scraped together wet twigs and tried to ignite them with a match. But the sticks were too soggy. He groped in vain for dry fuel. Soon the flame of his fire petered out.

Jules wasted hours there, trying. When he guessed it was about noon, fury against Catterson drove him on. "He must be stop at the border, Sarjong!"

On through thicket after thicket, shouting, stumbling. Night came on again, cold and damp. Jules could feel his burden shiver. He himself, shirtless, was chilled to the bone.

Jules had no idea when morning came again. For by then it was snowing. Flakes spanked icily on his face.

They came, after torturing hours, to a lake. Which lake? There were so many lakes in these woods. Shouts brought only echoes. Jules tried to circle the lake. Willows at the shore pushed him back. Circling the other way, he stepped into slime knee-deep.

He retreated from the lake. His muscles were numb, his feet leaden, and when next he stumbled Jules sprawled there in despair, sobbing. The dog whimpered and that alone kept Jules from giving up.

"Navair you let me down on any trail, Sarjong. Now she is my turn, *mon cher ami.*"

Always it was pity for the dog which drove him on.

This was the third day, Jules knew. Too late in any case to stop Catterson. Catterson would be on a train, about now, and nearing the border. "But you I save, Sarjong." He pressed on in snow ankle deep.

But why was there no underbrush here? Dripping, icy switches had been slapping, but now there were only trees.

He bumped into a tree and felt of its bole. No bark. Only a slick, charred surface. He groped to another tree and found it the same. He sniffed at his fingers. Then he knew. These were burnt trees. A forest fire had left them black and naked.

Instantly Jules knew where he must be. On the edge of the great Musk Ox Lake fire—the very flame which, a year ago, had cheated him of sight.

"*Le bon Dieu* be thank, Sarjong!"

He need guess no longer. The rim of

this charred area would lead him surely to friends.

"We are there in seex hour, *mon brave!*" cried Jules.

He turned—his scheme of steering was simple now. When he bumped into a charred tree he need only veer to the right. An uncharred tree veered him to the left. This way he could keep inevitably on the fringe of a fire which had been extinguished exactly at Musk Ox settlement.

Snow was knee deep and driving. Jules pressed on, shouting. In six hours, from far ahead, came an answering hail.

JULES awakened on a cabin bed. He could feel the warmth of a stove nearby. Then he heard voices — whisperings from the old boatman of Musk Ox Lake; quick, urgent questions from Corporal Steve of the Mounted Police.

Best of all, Jules could feel Sergeant-Major's tongue licking his hand.

In a moment he called Steve over and told his story.

Steve said grimly: "Chances are that beggar's over the border by now. Got anything to give us a line on him, 'cept a rusty .38 gun?"

"Only hees watch," Jules answered. His training as a courier on the Force had taught him that criminals seldom use their real names. To trace them, police often have to start with some intimate personal possession such as a gun or a watch.

"During the night I have hear his watch ticking," Jules explained, "where he leave it on the table. The watch have stop by morning. It does not tick now. But I feel to the table and find it there, so I have breeng it along."

"Let's have it, Jules."

But when the exhibit was produced, Steve exclaimed: "This isn't a watch, Jules! It's the right size and shape, and it feels like a watch, but it's something else. Something he'd need pretty bad—on a forced march through the woods."

HARRY CATTERSON climbed a tree. The railroad should be close ahead. In two days he should have reached it, yet three had now passed.

How and why had he missed that great trunk line that spans Canada like a bridge?

Catterson knew only too bitterly.

Far away now he heard them coming —mounted men a-gallop through the woods, then a hoarse, mournful baying. They were tracking him down with dogs.

In dismal, swirling snow, Catterson despaired. If only he'd kept heading south, these past three days, he'd be safe by now.

Yet how could he keep accurately south, through a storm, without his pocket compass?

How and why, he wondered, had that groping blind man picked it up from his bunkside table?

The baying of dogs came nearer. Catterson slipped down from the tree and took flight on course unknown. His Seeing Eye was gone.

Yet the enemy drove on in this mad orgy of attack —

ATTACK ON AMERICA

By ARED WHITE

RICH, powerful and the most defenceless of the great nations, America had listened to ominous war portents in Europe and Asia, and yet had said, "It can't happen here."

But alert military and espionage chiefs knew different. Unmistakably, powerful foreign interests were working to prepare for armed invasion of this country.

Bearing forged passports, Captain Allen Benning arrived in Mexico City in an effort to probe this acute menace to our border. He was masquerading as a Lieutenant Bromlitz, an American army deserter who had accepted an important military post in Mexico, but who had been detained and imprisoned in Paris before he could go there.

Mexico, he soon discovered, was an

armed camp, under the orders of General Van Hassek, German military genius. The former Mexican army was no more—in its place was a formidable fighting unit, manned by European officers and equipped with weapons far superior to anything the United States could muster against it. And it was equally obvious that attack was planned in the immediate future.

Returning to Washington, Benning presented his findings to his chief, and the War Department was roused to action at last. A conference with the President disclosed the fact that he was thoroughly in accord with the army, but that both of them, for the present, were powerless. Powerful opposition legislative blocs would ridicule such stories as Bennings' as mere war mongering to win the next election.

Paradoxical as it seemed, America had to be attacked before she could put the wheels of national defence in full motion.

And then—it came. Enemy planes droning out of the night, near Fort Sam Houston, Texas. A hissing shriek, a savage blast of yellow flame, the shrieks of wounded men.

It couldn't happen—but it had. America was being attacked—without warning!

The inevitable reaction swept the country as the enemy airmen sowed the first seeds of terror. Galveston, Houston, New Orleans felt the first fury. And before the horror of that news had reached the man in the street, the worst blow of all was to fall.

Washington was bombed, and the enemies' ace of targets—the White House—was demolished. The President of the United States was dead! The country was leaderless, because the Vice President had succumbed to a heart attack a few days before.

There was only one thing to do. The air attack, while useful as a terrorist measure, was merely the first step in organized invasion. Before the machines of war could be mobilized and built, the pitifully small army would have to make its stand. The Second Division took up position defending San Antonio to meet that first mighty wave.

A sleek war machine, the Second, organized at full war strength, highly trained and mobile. But—it was the only division of its kind in the army!

The Van Hassek columns cleared the Nueces River and thundered down barrages in the van of their northward attack. And in an underground dugout General Mole, division chief, gathered his tense staff together and gave his final orders.

"A new Alamo to remember, gentlemen. We'll give that to the country, if we lose every last man. Put that thought into the teeth of your men. That's all!"

(*Third of four parts*)

WHEN the hot Texas sun slipped down to the horizon through the haze in the west, a furious roar of motors swept the Second Division. The flight of enemy attack planes, flying at an altitude of less than five hundred feet, struck with the sharp bite of forked lightning.

There were six planes in the flight, echeloned in sections of three, and they attacked with the paralyzing shock of complete surprise. Riflemen and machine-gunners floundered into action, but only in time to send scattering fusillades after planes that flashed in the distance.

Over the 9th Infantry's sector the attack planes seemed close enough to be hit with a hand-grenade. Men gaped after the apparition, or ducked into their holes in the ground against the menace of fragmentation bombs. But there came no explosion. The enemy had not opened up with their machine-guns.

"Gas!"

The alarm was barked by an alert platoon commander and caught up on the instant by a hundred throats. Van Hassek's attack flight had opened the tanks on their wings and poisoned the air behind with an atomized cloud. There was a ten-mile wind in the air. Officers who knew the game made hurried calculations. There would follow a band of toxic gas 1500 feet wide across the 9th Infantry's sector.

"Gas!"

The warning outcry rose in volume from two thousand throats. Terror

froze on men's faces. A few broke from their positions and started running. Officers barked orders; noncoms raged at their men.

Stay put! Discipline slowly but surely prevailed over the hot impulse of self preservation. Men dove into their trenches to bury their faces in the earth, or ripped off their cotton shirts, and wound them, doused with water, about their faces. Gas, and not a gas mask in the entire regiment—only ninety in the whole division, and those for demonstration purposes in training tests!

With outward calmness the sector commander estimated the menace and bellowed orders for squads to give way to the right and left of the menaced area. Men, thus released by command, raced to the right and left of the gas patch. The sector commander swore furiously to neutralize the ague that shook his teeth and knees.

What type of gas had the Van Hassek barbarians put down? Obviously not a mustard or persistent gas. The Van Hassek infantry would not want the sector contaminated in the morning when they launched their attack. A noncom caught the answer as his eyes burned into tears.

"Tear gas!" he shouted.

The sector commander cursed again and trotted off to the left, imparting a show of deliberation to his sprint. Gas officers were making their calculations of what appeared a new gas. Men were running out of the way. Some were caught by fumes, tears welling from their smarting eyes. Perspiring faces shortly began to blister, revealing a new component in the stinging gas. Scores of men, afflicted with a lachrymation and burns that might extend over several days, would have to be evacuated to the hospital at San Antonio for treatment.

OVERHEAD, American planes were redoubling their efforts. The 33d Pursuit Squadron was hawking over the sector. The 77th Pursuit Squadron was patrolling to the front. The audacious attack flight of Van Hassek's had used its heels to get away intact. The American pilots were sharply alert against a second such surprise. Reenforcements flew up from Kelly Field, two flights from the 79th Pursuit Squadron.

From Louisiana's Barksdale Field had come the flower of the fighting craft of the army's Third Wing. The 8th, 13th and 90th Attack Squadrons of that wing had been harassing Van Hassek's columns since early morning and had yielded a toll of seventeen planes to enemy anticraft. The fighting pilots of the 55th and 79th Pursuit Squadrons had retaliated by shooting down twenty-four Van Hassek planes. The invaders now were avoiding combat in the air on terms of equal strength.

From Virginia's Langley Field there had arrived late in the afternoon the Second Wing's 2nd bombardment group, together with the 8th Pursuit Group's 35th Pursuit Squadron and Flight A of the 16th Observation Squadron.

From California's First Wing fields there were en route an entire group of attack planes, two pursuit and two additional attack squadrons. By tomorrow it was intended that Van Hassek's eaglets should come in for a lacing from the machine-guns of attack and pursuit planes. As for bombs, the country's meager supply was being frantically shaken together to give the bombardment squadrons sorely needed ammunition. So far, anything resembling a bomb supply had not reached the fighting front.

At the division command post, General Mole and his staff were busy with an estimate of the Van Hassek gassing. A staff officer sat on the field phone for an hour, while enemy artillery hammered the sector from long range. The 9th finally closed its books on the gassing.

"Forty-seven men evacuated, and a lot more ought to be who insist on sticking it out for the fight!" Colonel Hail, commanding the 9th, roared over the field wire. There was a touch of the stuff in the colonel's own eyes and there were stinging blisters on his neck, chest and rump. His rage soared as he unbosomed the facts to division. "Hell, what kind of a country is it that hasn't

got brains enough to fix itself up with a few dollars worth of gas masks! Now I lose a platoon on a few whiffs of gas! If the wind isn't with us we'll not even get a chance to fight in the morning! But for the time being we've got everything in hand down here in the Ninth!"

Mole and his staff grimly watched the fading light of day. There was a tightening of tension throughout the sectors as dusk slowly engulfed them and deepened into night. Off in the distance, the blackness was cut into a thousand ribbons as Van Hassek's searchlights churned the skies. No searchlight went up from the Second—there were none to send up. Since fires could not be built in the field ranges, a cold meal went forward: fruit and sandwiches, together with G.I. cans of drinking water that came out from San Antonio in a supply train.

Long range artillery pounded away laconically, tearing great craters in the Second's artillery area and hitting near the division's main line of resistance, and back in the bivouacs of the reserves. This told Mole that enemy observation planes had photographed his positions in detail—and confirmed the hint of what must be expected during the night.

Flight A of the 16th Observation Squadron picked up the enemy dispositions. The Van Hassek main column was unwinding itself for its night's bivouac and the maneuver forward to its jump-off for attack at daybreak. The Brownsville and Eagle Pass columns were far back and evidently not intended for part in the initial attack.

BEHIND the delay of those two flank columns of Van Hassek's invaders lay a new epic in red. There were only meager details for General Mole, brought in by his attached observation planes, but they were details to stir the blood.

Fifth and Twelfth Cavalry Regiments had been overtaken by Van Hassek attack planes and mechanized cavalry. Unhorsed, the U. S. cavalrymen took position astride the roads to fight on foot. Since the mechanized enemy had stripped them of their means of withdrawal and they had no taste for surrender, they fought with a fierce desperation, taking their losses and grimly holding on.

Van Hassek commanders had been forced to deploy more and more troops in their efforts to shoot the cavalrymen out of position. Not until after three o'clock in the afternoon were they able to mop up the remaining squads and take a handful of unwounded prisoners who had run out of ammunition. Which meant it would be noon tomorrow before the main Brownsville and Eagle Pass columns could reach San Antonio.

Evident it was, as the enemy purpose unfolded itself, that Van Hassek did not mean to delay. With the preponderance of force held by his main Laredo column he had no need to wait. For that matter it hardly made sense, within the Van Hassek line of military reasoning, that the Second Division would commit the brash audacity of a serious fight in front of San Antonio. Withdrawal would be only the logical course for the Americans, and Van Hassek had no reason to expect anything more than a few holding battalions at daybreak, resistance that would roll up in a hurry and scatter before his massed assault waves.

"Bombers flying in, altitude between 8000 and 10,000 feet!"

The warning came in from an observation plane a few minutes after nine o'clock. Fast on the heels of the warning came the devastating roar of a heavy bomb. The earth churned under the roar of successive explosions. A squadron of nine bombers, air service reported, using an estimated 300 pound bomb which would have a fragmentation and shock effect. A second enemy squadron was reported flying in.

The warning buzzed out over the field wire to the sectors. Men were to take cover as best they could. Mole swore through his clenched teeth and shook an irate fist at the sky. If only he had some anti-aircraft with which to cut the skies. At least those bombers would be driven to an altitude from which their marksmanship would be hit-or-miss. Now they would have their own way with Mole. All his men could do was take it.

More long range artillery opened up. Night became another volcanic bedlam, the Second's position a raging inferno that drove men huddling into their holes, to claw under a maddening impulse to dig their way down, down out of it all. Attack flights roared over, released fragmentation bombs attached to parachutes, small bombs that exploded on coming to earth.

It confirmed Mole's theory that Van Hassek expected an American withdrawal. This enemy blow fell at exactly the hour the Second would be pulling out if such had been its intention. Shrieks of wounded men rent the night in the 23d Infantry sector where a bomb crashed into a company strongpoint. Another bomb destroyed one of the 12th Field Artillery's 75s and killed five men.

In the 20th Infantry sector a 600 pound bomb fell in the rear of a company position with a devastating force that reduced seventeen men to speechless, trembling impotence, though no man was wounded. Later they were reported slowly recovering their wits from the shock and were not evacuated.

Van Hassek's planes were operating without lights. American pursuit hawks buzzed about, hunting in the darkness. Through a wracking hour the Second's men lay and took it, clinging desperately to the tenacious steel fiber of their discipline against the impulses of flight and madness that clutched at their minds. Van Hassek's fury rose and fell intermittently, then slowly dwindled away into a mere barking of some long range artillery that was pounding the roads into San Antonio.

THE clash of musketry far out in front signaled an end to the hurricane. Van Hassek patrols were pressing the American outposts, seeking information of an American withdrawal that had not occurred. Half a dozen Van Hassek riflemen were gobbled up by the 9th infantry outpost and shunted back for questioning.

Bronzed, lean, well set up fellows, these prisoners. Two Germans, an Italian and three Spanish regulars who had fought through the war in Spain. They wore the burnt-grass cotton khaki uniform of the new Mexican army, but their rifles were the German Mauser. On their persons they carried no telltale papers. As for giving information, they took refuge in the grim, unshaken silence of the seasoned soldier.

Over the field wire, Mole's staff checked casualties at eleven o'clock. The bombardment had killed only 71 men, wounded 142. Another 80 were numbed by shock. Three had been stripped of their wits and sent back, in driveling madness, for evacuation.

Mole nodded his head approvingly at this small toll. It did not surprise him that he had lost so few men to the Van Hassek strafing. This was not Mole's first battle. In France he had learned how frugal can be the night's harvest of artillery and bombardment. In the morning, when the infantry came to grips, there would be a different story.

"I've been talking to Brill at San Antonio," Mole told his staff when he had completed his newest estimate. "Fort Sam Houston took another air beating tonight. Our service has been forced to abandon Kelly and Randolph fields. Galveston got a dose of mustard gas tonight after our 69th anti-aircraft regiment there shot down an enemy bomber. The Galveston hospitals are filled with choking people—not a gas mask in the city! My mind has had so many jolts I just can't feel things any longer. If you'll excuse me, gentlemen—"

General Mole staggered but caught himself. His skin was ashen with fatigue and he was holding on by sheer will. There had been a lapse in his memory; now he picked up the gap.

"Yes, gentlemen, I mustn't forget the important thing. The 141st and 142d Texas Infantry regiments, 75 percent mobilized, have trucked it into San Antonio and are moving out here tonight. They've also two battalions of their 131st Field Artillery.

"Put the guard infantry in reserve just south of San Antonio. Keep the mechanized cavalry out to look after our flanks. I am going to turn in for some sleep, but don't hesitate to call me. Otherwise call me when the enemy preparation

fire puts down on us in the morning. Goodnight, gentlemen."

CHAPTER XII

THE NEW ALAMO

FIRST Lieutenant Boynton, 9th Infantry, lay sprawled on the ground, his eyes straining into the first graying light of approaching dawn. Above the thunder of the enemy artillery preparation he could feel the pounding of his blood against his eardrums. For half an hour the Van Hassek artillery had vented its spleen from echeloned regiments of light, medium and heavy artillery.

Behind that curtain of fire and thunder, Boynton knew, the Van Hassek infantry was moving forward to the assault. From his position out in front of the American outpost line it was Boynton's job to discover the attack and fall back to the outpost with twenty riflemen of his, who lay immediately behind him.

That roar of artillery consumed all existence as the high explosive shells hammered the Second Division's sectors from front lines to artillery positions. The Second's artillery now was pounding back with its one light and one medium regiments, searching the night with shell in front of the division to demoralize the unseen assault waves.

Boynton's eyes caught an instant's glimpse of infantry, men silhouetted against the sheet-lightning of artillery flashes. Not more than a hundred yards away, he estimated the enemy. He slipped the safety lock of his service automatic and lifted the weapon in front of his face. His men, long tense and ready, fitted the butts of their new semi-automatic rifles against their shoulders and waited.

Like a ship looming suddenly out of thick fog there came into view the weaving shadows that were the flesh and blood of moving infantry. A spurt of flame leaped from the muzzle of Boynton's pistol. It released the pent-up rage of twenty Garand rifles which sent a stream of lead pouring into those shadows of the night.

In the swift jumble of action Boynton caught the fall of wounded men, heard the cries of pain and the shrill of commanders' whistles, the bark of subalterns above the bellowing artillery. Rifle flashes stabbed the graying dawn as the enemy sprawled to the ground and fired back. Boynton hugged the earth only long enough to satisfy himself that it was an attack wave, not a mere patrol, he had encountered; then he fell back, his men firing intermittently as they ran, to the shelter of fox holes in the outpost.

The outpost line, lightly held, poured lead from its semi-automatics and machine-guns. When it found itself confronted by superior forces, its defenders promptly retreated to the main line of resistance which ran a ragged, irregular line of trenches and centers of resistance over a front of ten thousand yards.

Van Hassek's infantry, in waves of men that reached across the whole front, struck the main line of resistance just as dawn exposed the attack. Lieutenant Boynton, back in his company's organized strongpoint in the 9th's infantry centers of resistance, coolly observed the effect of his company's fire and the progress of the enemy attack.

Surely, Boynton argued, the enemy meant nothing more, here in front of the center of the American position, than a holding attack to pin the 9th to the ground while masses of infantry drove a red wedge, regardless of cost, into some carefully selected point on the flank of the defensive position.

Colonel Hail of the 9th, observing the attack from a vantage point, expected nothing more than that. Later, when Van Hassek's scheme of maneuver had cut a critical hole into the division's vitals, the whole force of the frontal attack would come rushing in to mop up.

The 9th's Garand rifles, light machine-guns, 37 millimeter cannon and small mortars poured all their fury into the surging assault. To the right and left, there were human targets for all the weapons of the 20th and 23d infantry regiments. One enemy wave after another melted into dead and wounded, only to be replaced by living waves that poured relentlessly on.

Half an hour of furious fighting passed before Colonel Hail accepted the evidence of his own eyes.

"My God, the fools are going to penetrate our center!" he roared.

ASTRIDE the Laredo-San Antonio highway, Van Hassek's infantry drove ahead, while successive waves of men melted across open terrain, where there was little benefit of cover. Desperately the enemy commanders fed in reserves from their superior hordes of men, out of which they could pay the bloody costs of their error in underestimating an enemy who had not been expected to offer serious resistance here.

What Van Hassek's infantry lost to their slower bolt-action rifles they made up by auxiliary arms, light machine-guns, mortars of many calibers, light and heavy tanks, superiority of artillery.

Shrapnel, mortars and musketry now beat down on the American centers of resistance with a fury that could not be withstood.

Lieutenant Boynton, who had known only the mimic warfare of minor maneuvers, wondered that a shred of human form could persist in this maelstrom of destruction that flailed the earth and air about him. His own Garands spurted death in a volume that should have mowed down all who appeared under their hot muzzles. Machine-guns drove streams of destruction that should have claimed the last survivor.

Yet the enemy drove on. Van Hassek's men burst ahead until Boynton could see the distended eyes and gaping, grimacing terror of their faces, as they bared themselves to a death against which they dared not turn their backs.

In front of his eyes there loomed a Van Hassek sergeant, an immense fellow with snarling open mouth and wide, staring eyes. The sharp convulsions of the sergeant's mouth told that he was lashing the remnant of his platoon forward with the barks of command, though his voice was drowned, along with the cries of wounded, in the uproar of battle.

Boynton lifted his pistol and aimed. But before he could press his trigger the sergeant pitched forward on his face, an inert hulk. A corporal leaped forward to command. Now they were coming to the threat of cold steel, bayonets flashing in the first rays of a hot morning sun.

The enemy poured on into Boynton's strongpoint. Boynton saw the survivors of his men were breaking, stubbornly fighting with bayonets, grenades and musketry as they fell back. Now he saw enemy tanks rolling in on his men, tanks whose steel armor deflected the regiment's old 37 millimeter guns that were being used until the new anti-tank guns could be brought from paper models to actual weapons. Boynton turned to rally his men, giving to his voice the full strength of his lungs.

"Up and at 'em!" he cried, into an inferno that drowned out his voice. "To hell with the swine!"

A second time he raised his voice; then he staggered drunkenly, spun half around and fell as consciousness snapped from his brain and his life snuffed out. It seemed incredible that human flesh could stand up under the strain and stress of the typhoon that raged through the next hour. Assault waves pressed forward, melted, American front line companies were decimated, platoons cut to shreds, yet the survivors carried on, dying in their tracks, or grudgingly yielding yardage before the thrust of superior numbers.

Having committed themselves to this folly of frontal attack, the Van Hassek commanders fed in reserve after reserve, regardless of cost, in their determination to break through with as little delay as possible. Once they succeeded in driving a wedge deep enough into the center, they knew the whole American sector would roll up in a chaos of defeated regiments.

But to accomplish this, their infantry must drive through succeeding lines. Capturing one, they faced another equally resistant. What the Americans lacked in auxiliary weapons they made up by their fighting spirit, a discipline hard as steel that put men through the terrors of battle and turned a deaf ear to impulses of flight and surrender. Even succeeding waves of tanks failed to ter-

rorize them or drive them out of position. All the advantages of auxiliary weapons failed to prevail.

One surging mass of enemy infantry engulfed the right of the 23d, and left of the 9th Infantry, late in the afternoon. Now the storm rose to new heights of desperation.

FIVE HUNDRED yards the invader progressed, swamping one strongpoint after another. Men fought with rifles, with grenades, with bayonets; the whole became a surging red welter. The Second's main line was threatened by a wedge that would force it back to its regimental reserve line. A second attack launched against that line, if it succeeded, meant inevitable defeat.

Into the mêlée came rushing American reserves, a coordinated counter attack by the 3d Battalion of the 23d and the 2nd Battalion of the 9th. They hit with a vigor that halted the menacing enemy masses. Their semi-automatics, pouring death as fast as fingers could work triggers, gave to the attacking American battalions the infantry weight of twice their numbers.

The enemy fell back, dug themselves into fox holes, waited. A lull came into the firing. The artillery roared on; machine-guns, light cannon, chattered and boomed, but the volcanic eruption of battle lost something of its volume. The cries of the stricken could be heard.

Van Hassek had lost the first round. He had committed the brash folly of underestimating his enemy. In his haste to blast his way through to San Antonio his conceit had misled him to disregard sound tactical principles. His initial assault had spent itself. It was for him to decide whether to drive fresh forces in to overwhelm the American position or launch a new maneuver to envelop the enemy flank by means of his Eagle Pass or Brownsville columns.

At the division command post, General Mole had slept through the morning preparation fire. Only by vigorously shaking him had his aid been able to rouse him. Dosing himself with strong coffee, Mole coolly watched the development of attack.

At all costs, Mole knew he was committed to hold until night. Daylight withdrawal, a precarious operation under the best conditions, was impossible in face of the enemy's long-range interdiction of roads and the swoops of attack squadrons.

Anxiously, Mole and his staff scanned information as it came in over the field wires and from observation planes. Van Hassek's columns still were moving up from Laredo, but no fresh movement of reserves was located in the immediate American front. Both the Brownsville and Eagle Pass columns were several hours removed from striking range of either flank.

Yet they might be able to make it through by late afternoon. Of his mechanized 8th Cavalry, Mole had sent all but Troop A and the scout car section to Hondo to delay the Eagle Pass column. The remainder he had sent to scout beyond Floresville against the Brownsville column.

His Texas regiments he had held in reserve; since, in the helter-skelter of emergency call, they had been given no opportunity to shake down and get needed training, equipment and discipline, Mole had intended using his national guard only in extremity.

Now he decided to put them in movement, one battalion of the 142d Texas Infantry to Hondo, one battalion of the 141st to Floresville, each with a battery of the 132d Texas Field Artillery. The others remained in reserve with the remnant of the 11th Infantry, where they could be used to support a threat against either flank.

Casualty reports came in, roughly computed, by noon. One hundred and seven officers, mostly lieutenants. Nineteen hundred men. Mole had thought himself dead to all emotion under the drain of the past two days. As he scanned the toll, tears welled in his eyes. A fifth of his command gone, many of them officers and men with whom he had served through long years of peace.

But discipline held up, and a stern, stubborn fighting spirit pervaded the ranks. That word came from the commanders of infantry who had taken the

brunt of the losses, from the artillery regiments, which were still being pounded by long-range artillery.

Boynton was cold clay, but the spirit in which he died lived grimly down the fighting front. The division was licking its wounds with its face to the enemy as it awaited fresh attack. Men, lightly wounded, refused evacuation. Against odds of men and weapons there remained the valor of a manpower that could be conquered only in death, or lawful order of retreat.

General Mole, when he had completed his survey, reiterated to his staff his decision to hold until night.

"When it is dark we withdraw back to San Antonio," he said. "Send a warning order out to the regiments immediately. In the meantime, let them attack all they want to. To hell with them!"

AS BATTLE reports from the Texas front poured into Washington over the radio, Captain Benning was assailed by restlessness at his own inaction. All day he had lolled about the cafes along Connecticut Avenue looking for the Van Hassek staff spies, Fincke and Boggio. Evening found him holding the bag.

Captain Boll's achievement in piloting his men through the storm of Van Hassek's air attacks had stirred the country. In the day's exploits of individual men and units there had been something to feed a bit of hope and courage to the country at a time when the army seemed to have failed in a crisis.

Benning and Boll had been classmates at the Military Academy, had gone to the 11th Infantry together as subalterns. Benning had served with the 11th for nearly a year until he went to the air corps, from which he had been shifted for military intelligence duty. Breathlessly he followed every scrap of information on the 11th.

Benning was picking at his dinner at the Mayflower when there came a final flash.

"You heard this afternoon of the gallant young officer, Captain Boll of our infantry," the broadcaster announced. "You recall that, although wounded in the cheek, he ignored his own wound and saw his men through to the Second Division south of San Antonio. You remember that Captain Boll refused medical attention until he had seen the last one of his wounded soldiers evacuated to a hospital in San Antonio. Because of the shortage of ambulances, Boll proceeded to hospital in a cargo truck with some of his lightly wounded men."

The announcer paused, his voice shook with feeling as he read a brief dispatch from San Antonio.

"Captain Henry Boll, 11th U. S. Infantry, died early this evening of wounds received in action. On being received at hospital after he had seen his command through from the border, the officer was found to have sustained seven wounds in the body. Captain Boll collapsed a few minutes after reaching the hospital and died this evening without having regained consciousness."

For a long time Benning sat looking across the blur of somber faces in front of him; then he left his unfinished dinner and went out into the street. Bitterly he cursed the circumstance that kept him from command when his comrades of the 11th and the air corps were standing the gaff.

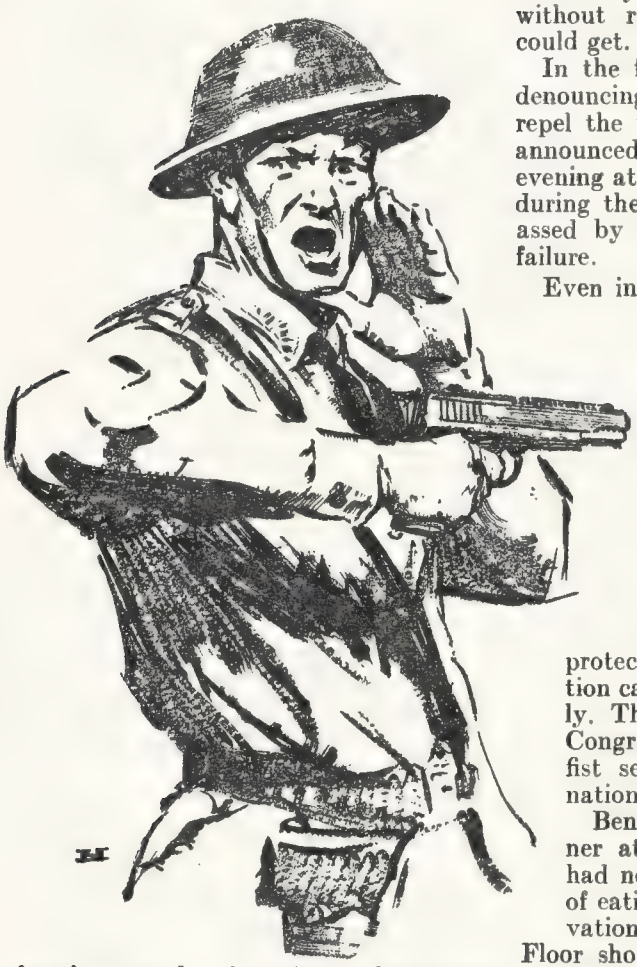
He walked to the Shoreham to get himself in hand. Even Flagwill's assertion that the coalition spy nest was more dangerous to the country than the present invasion brought him small comfort. But he finally reminded himself that he had a job to do and not until he had done it would there be hope of transfer back to the line.

Washington, the whole country, was in a state of furor. All day Benning had been shut off from the War Department with its staggering problems and black uncertainties. Yet he could feel in the air about him the pounding pulse of a country plunged into a crisis of violence that shattered all its habits of thinking.

Official reassurance was being fed out over the radio to those sections of the country outside the immediate reach of invasion. They were told there was no immediate danger of new air raids.

New Orleans, Galveston and other cities were being organized against air raids that could not be prevented for the time being. It was a matter of not

"Up and at 'em!"



forming crowds, of getting underground against demolition bombs and gas. People who could leave those cities were urged to take refuge in towns and hamlets until the danger could be brought under control, although tens of thousands needed no such warning and were pouring into the country.

Some highly alarming, if unconfirmed, reports of a mysterious brewing of mischief in the Orient, had the coast cities on edge.

Mobilization of the four existent regular army and eighteen national guard infantry divisions was reported sixty per-cent complete. The third Army was to concentrate in Texas as rapidly as possible, but the War Department refused to give out military details. No censorship of military news had been clamped down as yet and the press was printing without restriction whatever news it could get.

In the face of nation-wide editorials denouncing the failure of the army to repel the invasion, General Hague had announced a personal broadcast for this evening at eight o'clock. On every hand during the day Benning had been harassed by denunciations of the army's failure.

Even in Congress, criticism had been angrily shouted during an emergency session to authorize half a million volunteers. A Congressman from a mid-western state, demanding investigation of military inefficiency, charged that no citizen could expect security when even the President in the White House had forfeited his life to our military failure to give the country protection. Benning, as this castigation came over the air, smiled bitterly. The man, through long years in Congress, had been a leader of pacifist sentiment, a relentless foe of national defense.

Benning ordered an elaborate dinner at the Shoreham. Though he had no appetite, he made a pretext of eating while he kept under observation those who came and went. Floor shows and music were out, and patrons of the place ate in glum silence or talked among themselves in low, tense voices.

Before starting on his rounds, Benning had stationed Lieutenant Jones, an intelligence assistant, on guard over the Massachusetts Avenue apartment of Mme. Pujol, with whom Boggio had dined and danced at the Shoreham immediately before the disastrous raid on the Capital. Jones' instructions were to hold Boggio under close observation and let Benning know as quickly as possible if the Italian appeared.

Seven thirty passed; the chief of staff

of the army would soon be on the air in a nation-wide hookup. New dispatches came in from San Antonio. The Second Division had held Van Hassek's troops off during the afternoon. The division was being subjected to long-range bombardment by enemy guns. General Mole was prepared for a night of heavy bombing from the air, but he meant to hold on and meet the main attack expected at daybreak.

"Flash—bombers reported approaching New Orleans, Galveston and Houston. The government's intelligence service will give prompt advance warning if any planes fly north of Texas. Everyone is urged to remain calm."

Several persons got up from their tables at this news and anxiously left the room. Others kept determinedly in their seats; a few affected nonchalant composure.

Into the dining room at this moment came Fincke, his face lined in a surly scowl. He sat down at a table across the room from Benning.

BENNING waited for several moments to regain complete composure and went over to a seat at the Fincke table. The Austrian looked up and brightened slightly.

"Thought I might find you here, Bromlitz," Fincke muttered.

"I suppose, Major," Benning said with a mischievous grin, "you are to be addressed as lieutenant colonel hereafter."

Benning's grin came hard, but his face was trained. Here was the man who hinted at promotion the evening before Washington was bombed, who surely, Benning thought, had in some way used his artillery talent in arranging lights or signals for the planes hurling through the night with their tons of destruction.

Fincke gleamed secretively. "I haven't been notified."

"It will come, all right," said Benning. He prodded conversation along, seeking information without seeming to probe for it. Believing that Washington was in no immediate danger of a new air raid, he surmised that Fincke's mission here might have been completed. He would be moving into a new program of a hidden thrust. Benning led the talk to the subject of leaving Washington, tracing out a conversational line from which he could retreat without having committed himself if it brought no results.

He sighed. "We've been lucky, Fincke. This city is hot. I'll be relieved when we get out of it."

"Hot? Oh, dangerous." Fincke lowered his voice, his eyes swiftly intent. "You haven't had any trouble? You haven't been followed?"

Benning felt on better ground. A man who is asking questions is slow to realize he is being questioned.

"I wouldn't have come here if I'd been followed. No—no trouble. Just a feeling we've been lucky, and I hope the luck holds just long enough."

"When are you leaving, Bromlitz?" Fincke probed at once.

"The same day you do." Benning hoped he told the truth, for he didn't want to lose contact with Fincke again.

"So!" said the Austrian, pleased that his questions had disclosed this tacit arrangement. "I am delighted, Bromlitz. I thought as much. I admit it—I do not sleep well here. I will breathe freely again when we get to sea."

Benning centered on the words. He said merely, with a grimace, "The last time I was seasick," and talked of the way of the Americans cowered before the radio and the latest extras, the stunned surprise of the country.

"We will give them a new shock. In military history—the greatest campaign, the best planned!" averred Fincke.

"Going directly aboard the ship?" Benning asked.

"Of course. Why not?"

"We might be cautious, you know."

"Of course. What is your idea, then?"

"To meet near there first, and make sure we are not being observed. We don't know what may develop."

"You are admirable, Bromlitz! It is a wise thing you suggest."

"If you agree, name the place, Fincke. Close to the ship but not so we seem to be going to it. Some nearby pier, eh?"

Fincke thought a moment. "Pier Eighteen, then."

"That's settled!" said Benning; he

shrugged and lighted a fresh cigarette.

"I'll be glad when the times comes—oh, a little early though, of course, Fincke? We do not want to stand around waiting for each other."

Benning could see the man's mind running on the spy's eternal fear of followers.

"At three thirty," Fincke decided. "I will not be late. Do you not be, Bromlitz."

"No fear." Benning said. He hoped that Fincke had suspected nothing, believed he had not. The Austrian might have set a trap for him in these directions if he had been clever enough, but the closeness of their work together for Van Hassek in Mexico City had evidently prevented any suspicions. But he dared not press him for information, lest he somehow reveal his own ignorance.

Several tables distant, directly behind Fincke, Benning had observed Lieutenant Jones. The lieutenant's eyes had let Benning know that he had a matter of urgency to discuss. Benning drained his glass and got up.

"Good luck, Fincke," he said. "You'll be here if I want to get in touch with you?"

"I'll be here every night, Bromlitz. To the salt air, eh?" he said with a secretive gleam.

It was some days off, then, this mysterious sailing.

"Except the night before, Fincke. I have orders to be at the Mayflower, if there are some last minute instructions for me. See you there, eh?"

Fincke nodded.

When Benning passed out into the street, Lieutenant Jones joined him and motioned him into a car.

"Sorry I couldn't get to you sooner, sir," Jones reported. "Boggio came out of the Pujol apartment at six thirty. The girl friend was with him. Outside they were joined by a man who apparently is Boggio's bodyguard. I followed them to the depot where Boggio and the other fellow took the seven o'clock train for New York. The girl returned home. I didn't have a chance to get a word to you sooner, Captain."

Benning studied his watch and made a rapid calculation. The hour was a few minutes short of eight o'clock.

"Drive me to the airport, Jones," he directed. "I've still time to meet Boggio when he steps off his train at the Pennsylvania station.

Benning pondered the news he had gleaned from Fincke. The rest could be checked up, what ships were sailing near Pier Eighteen, the absence of Fincke from the Shoreham to give a day's warning.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FORTY-FIFTH FLOOR

LT. JONES turned on his radio as the car got in motion towards the airport. General Hague was just coming on the air, introduced to the nation by the Secretary of War.

"I will speak very frankly to the country," the general said. "I will give you facts it is important for you to understand. First, our inability to prevent invasion is no fault of the army. The army is your army, limited by you through legislation and appropriations. The fact that it is scattered in small posts throughout the country, instead of being concentrated in combat divisions for proper training, is no fault of the War Department.

"I speak without bitterness or blame, but it is important that you face the future with belief in your potential armed forces.

"Briefly, our armies must be assembled slowly from scattered garrisons. They must be supplied with essential equipment which is not now in existence. Initially our actions must be limited by immediate lack of ammunition reserves and armaments. If we cannot supply adequate anti-aircraft protection to our important cities, deeply as our heart bleeds for them, it is because we have insufficient anti-aircraft.

"I reveal no secret to the enemy in saying this frankly. It was a knowledge of these facts that encouraged attack upon us. For the enemy's straining ears I shall have another message in a moment.

"Often you have heard the phrase 'lives sacrificed on the altar of unreadiness'. Yesterday and today we have realized the tragedy that lies in those words. In future months I fear all of us may come to know cruel sacrifice.

"What trouble lies ahead, what forces of attack we may have to deal with in the future, are not clear at the present moment. In the world of our foes I find little optimism for belief that the invasion of Texas is the brief tempest of a bold raid.

"But I want to say to you that whatever violence lies ahead, this country will master it. Let our foes mark these words. The United States is unconquerable. Its resources and manpower, its determination and courage, are equal to any conceivable emergency. Whatever reverses may lie ahead of us in the immediate future will only harden our resistance.

As the chief of staff closed, Lieutenant Inevitably that day will come when the foes of the United States will meet the mighty vengeance of our massed valor!" Jones said bitterly, "I'm sorry he couldn't give them the whole picture, Captain! I mean what a jam the army's in if there's a real invasion. Why, they're raking the country right now for ammunition enough to hold Texas, not to mention what happens if we get hit from the Pacific!"

"Telling too much would only start a new panic," Benning said, shaking his head. "Got to give the truth out in small doses while the public readjusts itself."

Benning, as they reached the airport, instructed, "Get G-2 on the phone at Governor's Island at once, Jones. I'd like to have two good intelligence men from First Corps area meet me at the Pennsylvania Hotel. One of them to be Lieutenant Crane, if he's available."

ON disembarking at Newark shortly before ten o'clock, Benning took a cab into the city and drove direct to the Pennsylvania, where he found Lieutenant Crane waiting. With him was Sergeant Adams, a seasoned and dependable non-commissioned officer. Both wore business suits.

Benning crossed over to the station as the train from Washington pulled in. Boggio and his henchman got off as soon as the train stopped and hurried out to catch a cab. Benning followed them alone in a second cab, while Crane and his sergeant trailed from a distance.

There was only a fraction of normal wheel traffic in the streets. Crowds on the sidewalks were thinned down to a mere dribble of humanity. New York had emerged from its first panics, but its populace was in tension over possible surprise raids on the city.

Exodus of thousands continued from hotels and residential districts. Many were fleeing to Canada, other thousands taking refuge in smaller cities up-state. Millions were in the throes of organization against sky raids. Emergency shelter must be allotted in subways, tunnels, basements, parks and suburbs. Theaters were temporarily closed by police order.

Boggio stopped near the McAlpin to let out his henchman and drove to the Empire State Building, where he paid his fare, dismissed the cab and went inside to be whirred up in an express elevator. Benning waited several minutes until the identical cage returned to the lobby.

"I just missed a friend, an Italian in a blue suit and white felt hat," Benning said to the operator. "Did he go to the roof with you?"

"Forty-fifth floor," the operator informed.

Benning shot up to the forty-fifth floor and walked cautiously down the hall. There was a light in but one of the offices. He read the legend on the door, "Andes Gold Mining and Milling Company, Inc."

Without pressing his luck any further he returned to the street. There seemed little reasonable doubt that Boggio had gone to the only lighted office on the forty-fifth. Also there was something in the name of the firm, considered in the light of tonight's events, that stirred Benning's imagination as he recalled Flagwill's tip from British Intelligence agents that the whole coalition espionage centered its activities in New York behind the masquerade of an unnamed business firm.

He crossed the street, meaning to keep

the Empire State under observation against Boggio's return to the ground street, when his way was barred by the stubby man who had accompanied Boggio from Washington. The fellow's face was bellicose, his hand thrust suggestively in his pocket.

"You was just up pretty high in the big building, wasn't you?" the fellow growled close to Benning's ear.

"What of it?" Benning asked.

"All right—maybe you want to tell me who you are and what you was doing up there?" Boggio's man countered.

Benning asked placidly, "But why should I want to do that?"

The other's round eyes gleamed. "It would be good for your health."

"Supposing I told you I was up to the forty-fifth to see a friend named Palacio Quatres about buying a pair of silver sabers?"

The man's hostility relaxed somewhat as he heard the Van Hassek words of secret identification. But after searching Benning's face, he shook his head.

"You may be all right, but we're playing no chance," he decided. "What you say to a little jump up to the forty-fifth with me, just to make sure?"

"If you insist," Benning said indifferently.

As they returned across the street, Benning did not risk looking about for Crane and the sergeant. With expert eye he watched his own chance of attack. His prompt capitulation had the effect of throwing his captor slightly off guard.

As they passed the entrance of a gown shop, Benning seized the fellow's gun arm and drove him into the dark entrance of the shop. The impact crashed the heavy glass door; the two went sprawling inside through a jagged wedge of broken glass.

THE Boggio henchman gave a cry of pain as the glass tore into his body, but floundered into battle with a surge of frantic strength that shook his arm free of Benning's grip. Benning regained his hold before the spy could bring a pistol into play. They had staggered to their feet in the uncertain battle over the weapon when Crane and Adams dashed up. A sharp tap of the sergeant's service pistol promptly ended the fray.

"Keep a watch outside, Adams," Benning said.

With Crane's help he bound the prisoner's arms. A watchman in tan uniform, attracted by the crash of glass, rushed in with drawn pistol. Crane promptly dismissed the watchman on the mission of notifying the owner of the shop of his broken door.

They were getting their prisoner, still in a daze, on his feet when Sergeant Adams hurried in from the street.

"Your Italian just came down, sir," he reported to Benning. "He's getting into a cab."

"Follow him!" Benning promptly instructed. "Follow him as long as he stays in New York. If he attempts to leave the city, arrest him. You don't need to be gentle if he gives you any trouble, Sergeant."

Benning instructed Crane to take the prisoner to Governor's Island. Then Crane was next to report to Benning at the nearby McAlpin. Benning walked to that hotel and put in a call for Colonel Flagwill. Flagwill was tied up in conference with General Hague, and an hour passed before he responded on the telephone.

There were several moments of silence on the wire as Flagwill's mind searched through Benning's disclosures; then he burst into excited enthusiasm.

"That sounds like the real quill, Benning—sounds like the trail we've all been looking for! If I didn't have you on the job I'd be tempted to come up myself. How many men do you figure on using?"

"I'd like to discuss that during the night with the corps area G-2 chief," Benning answered.

"I'll instruct Colonel Wallace at once to give you whatever you want from corps area, Benning. Have you decided on any plan of attack?"

"Tonight, sir," Benning replied, "I thought I'd keep entirely away from the Empire State. In the morning I intend to go up to the forty-fifth alone and give the Andes Gold Mining and Milling Company the once over."

BENNING was having a late breakfast at his hotel the next morning, after a busy night plotting moves, when Crane came in, his face glum and heavy with tragedy.

"Your Italian got Adams last night," Crane said at once, sinking heavily into a chair at Benning's table. "Shot him twice with a small automatic. He died an hour ago."

"Where did this happen?"

"At Newark. Adams, when we brought him to hospital, told me Boggio got suspicious when his man didn't join him outside the Empire State. He had the cab drive him under the Hudson and headed to the Newark airport. Adams followed closely. Boggio stepped behind a hangar, and as Adams came up shot without warning. He had a plane waiting and it took right off."

Benning sighed.

"We put out a warning," Crane went on. "Our intercepts picked up the engines of a plane over Lexington at two this morning. It was traveling high and fast and must have been Boggio's plane. There isn't much chance that pursuit aviation can pick him up in Texas, but we've put heat on the air corps to make a try."

The public radio in the dining room was buzzing with war bulletins. Van Hassek's attack had jumped off at daybreak, but at eight o'clock had made small progress against the Second Division. Europe was in a turmoil. Unconfirmed reports came through London of an immense troop concentration on the Chinese coast, another report of a coalition fleet mobilizing in the Mediterranean.

The stock market was closed, following a crash that had carried securities to the lowest levels of the century. Bonds had followed stocks to the bottom. Predictions for the future were bitterly pessimistic. Word was out that industrial mobilization offered little hope to industry of more than an existence. Congress was arraigned already against the war profits that made twenty thousand millionaires during the World War period.

Enemy bombing had centered on only two cities last night—Galveston and San Antonio. Fort Sam Houston had been heavily pounded and many of its installations destroyed. At Galveston the air raiders had targeted on Fort Crockett, where the 69th anti-aircraft, one of the army's meager seven anti-aircraft regiments, had drawn the wrath of Van Hassek's bombardiers.

The 69th, short two gun batteries and two machine-gun batteries, had pounded away valiantly and scored two bombers down, but paid the price with one hundred and forty men, three guns and seven searchlights. The 61st anti-aircraft regiment, likewise short two gun and three machine-gun batteries, had been ordered to the border from Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

There were only three other regular regiments within the United States, the 62d at Fort Totten, New York the 63d at Fort McArthur, California, and the 65th at Fort Scott, California. The 60th was in the Philippines, the 64th in Hawaii. The ten national guard anti-aircraft were being mobilized as rapidly as possible.

BENNING left the hotel at nine o'clock and walked to the Empire State Building. During the night he had collected information of the Andes Gold Mining and Milling Company. The firm had been operating in New York for ten years past. It was a small but regular dividend payer, was not listed on the stock exchange, and had conformed to all laws and requirements in regard to its operations and transactions. Simon Salvatore, a Chilean, had recently taken over as managing director.

On reaching the forty-fifth floor, Benning went direct to the company's offices and stepped inside. The door opened on a large room whose walls were lined with metal filing cabinets. Four clerks were busy sorting record cards on which they appeared to be making entries from yellow sheafs of paper.

A fat man with shrewd, round eyes came up to Benning at once.

"I am Mr. Oldfer, the office manager," he said in an ingratiating purr. "Is there something I can do for you?"

"I am a stockholder," Benning said,

intent on completing his survey in the shortest possible time. "I wish to inquire if it is true that the company is disposing of two mines, the Palacio Quatres and the Silver Sabers?"

Oldfer's upper teeth gnawed nervously at his lower lip at this blunt identification of the visitor as a Van Hassek agent.

"Maybe," Oldfer hesitated, "you want to see Senor Salvatore?"

"You'll do very well," Benning said. "I'm lately in from Mexico City and due back in Washington as soon as I can get there. I want to check our file of Baltimore stockholders."

"To do that," Oldfer objected, vigorously shaking his head, "you must have the permission of Senor Salvatore."

"Nonsense!" Benning said with authority. "You say you are the office manager and I have just introduced myself. I'm in a hurry, Oldfer."

Benning stepped past the fellow and went to the open "B" cabinet, at which a ruddy clerk was working. While Oldfer pattered up with muttered protests, Benning thumbed through the Baltimore entries. Ramsey, Ringold, Rosser, Rouse, Rumbolt. He noted that after each listed stockholder there were symbols purporting to show number of stock shares held, dates of dividend payment and other littered data.

To the casual eye, the entries might have brought no suspicion. But Benning's eye caught the pertinent detail that in the Baltimore file, as compared with other files through which he hurriedly skimmed, there were many more entries on each card. Baltimore, headquarters of the Army's Third Corps area, and flanked by some of the army's important arsenals and secret proving grounds, was a logical beehive of espionage.

"Your Baltimore file shows the proper activity," Benning announced, turning abruptly away to face Oldfer. "Thank you for your courtesy."

Oldfer was gnawing again at his lower lip. The color was gone from his face. He blocked the way as Benning started to the door. The others gathered close in a tense group.

"Senor Salvatore will be here very soon," Oldfer said. "It is necessary that you talk with Mr. Salvatore before you leave."

"Tell Salvatore," Benning said, scowling at his watch, "that I'll be back by eleven at latest. Just now I'm in a hurry."

"Oh, no, but you will wait," Oldfer said. "You will wait, or Senor Salvatore would never forgive me." He turned to one of his clerks and cried, "Here, Backropp, you will keep the gentleman company until Mr. Salvatore arrives!"

A BARREL-CHESTED man whose squat legs, long angular face and flail-like arms gave him the aspect of an orangutan, stepped forward with a nod. The others moved closer. Benning saw that only by force might he pass out the door of the Andes Gold Mining and Milling Company. Numbers were against him.

"All right, Oldfer," he yielded with annoyance, "I'll wait a reasonable time."

Backropp escorted Benning into Salvatore's private room behind the main office, where he indicated a seat in front of Salvatore's mahogany desk. Backropp sat down close by and folded his ponderous arms across his chest. Two others of Oldfer's men quit their work at the files to take position just outside Salvatore's door. Benning saw that he was as definitely a prisoner as if he had been bound and gagged.

He looked at his watch and made a calculation. Carefully as he had covered his rear with G-2 agents, he had not figured on any such swift denouement as this. Impatience surged through him as his mind swept to its deductions. He estimated that there must be at least ten thousand cards in Salvatore's files. Possibly fifteen thousand or even more.

Moreover he was now convinced that those cards listed enemy agents, were a muster-roll of the sinister army that was to strike from within. Such an army would include expert workers and mechanics in mills and factories, many of them key men ready to wreck industrial mobilization upon which the country

must depend for supplies for its armies in the field.

Here might be listed, too, the spies who already had accomplished their mission. Spies who had gathered information at arsenals, navy yards, proving grounds, military offices, information that must have gone into forging the enemy decision to strike. Those, along with the suave agents who, through long years, had promoted unpreparedness by financing unsuspecting pulpiteers, periodicals and women with peace banners, innocent American workers who proudly thought themselves crusaders against the black monster of war.

Barely fifteen minutes had passed before Benning heard someone enter the office from outside. He walked to an open window, Backropp watching him narrowly. Casually he selected a cigarette from his case, lighted it, took two quick puffs and cast it out the window.

"It's a long way down to the street from here, Backropp," he said, leaning out for a brief survey below.

Benning saw a yellowish phosgene smudge trail out behind his falling cigarette.

"It's not so far down," Backropp muttered, "if you don't take an elevator."

Out in the office Oldfer was speaking in a tremulous voice.

"Senor Salvatore, he may be all right," Oldfer said anxiously. "But I don't like the way he nosed about."

Salvatore strode into the room, an erect, saturnine man in morning coat, striped trousers and lurid neckwear. Even in the shock of recognition, Benning knew. This man's presence confirmed his every suspicion of the Andes Gold Mining and Milling Company. Salvatore was Gaujos, the masquerader with whom he had traded shots at San Antonio, the man who as Colonel Bravot had been his chief of section in Van Hassek's espionage service.

CHAPTER XIV

SPY NEST

BRAVOT sat down at his desk and fixed his gaze on his visitor. In his cold, blunt eyes there showed no recognition of the American agent whom he had glimpsed at San Antonio and failed to recognize in Mexico City.

"What explanation have you to offer of your visit here?" Bravot inquired.

"I'm here from Mexico City, Colonel Bravot," Benning answered with calm assurance. "I have identified myself and am prepared to do so again."

Bravot offered no reply but a slow transformation worked itself in his face as he sat through half a minute staring at his unexpected visitor. His skin lost its color, a vein throbbed at his forehead, his eyes narrowed.

Without taking his eyes from Benning, Bravot slowly opened a drawer of his desk and brought out an automatic pistol.

As he levelled the weapon across the desk Bravot's left hand went to a call button which sent a rasping summons into the outer office. Oldfer came in at once.

"We have had a damned close call, Oldfer," Bravot said. He passed his left hand across his forehead, now wet with perspiration. "This man is an army intelligence agent who shot at me once, and whom I stupidly overlooked in Mexico due to my concern with other matters."

Bravot's voice was a low, calm monotone. He did not take his eyes from Benning to look at Oldfer. Oldfer shook from head to foot.

"Mightn't it occur to you, Colonel, that you're making yourself ridiculous?" Benning challenged. He had no hope of dissuading Van Hassek's spy chief, but played for precious time. A few minutes might bring intervention from below into this crisis. "I think you'd better talk this nonsense over before you do anything foolish."

Bravot ignored Benning and said to Oldfer, "Backropp will attend to this man while you prepare at once to move everything out of here immediately to location A."

Benning heard the outer door open. Oldfer, terror leaping into his little eyes, jumped across the room and slammed Bravot's door. Benning sprang to his feet but the ape-like arms of Backropp were about him in an instant with all the force of motor driven prongs. A

"This man is an army intelligence agent..."

savage hand closed over Benning's mouth.

"Quietly, Backropp, and work fast!" Bravot commanded.

Benning was lifted clear of the floor by a strength against which his own sinews were powerless. Backropp carried him across the room to the concrete vault that lay open behind heavy steel doors, hurled him inside with stunning violence and heaved the doors shut.

Benning picked himself up and shook his head to clear his wits. Only the habit of self discipline saved him from panic as he found himself engulfed in this black, steel-encased void. He heard the vague click of bolts as the door was locked, then silence.

He felt about the interior of his prison and estimated its dimensions as some six feet wide by ten feet in depth. He attempted a calculation. How long would the oxygen hold out? He could not remember the formula. He concluded that

he might last an hour or half a dozen hours, depending on his endurance. But he knew that unless rescue came, it was only a matter of time until he must extract the last bit of oxygen and die the gasping death of a fish out of water.

He sat down, decided to breathe slowly, hoard each breath of air. He knew that rescue depended largely upon that phosgene cigarette he had tossed out the window as a signal to intelligence operatives below. He argued that they had caught the signal—it must have been G-2 men who invaded the Andes office at the critical instant of his imprisonment.

His ears strained for sound, but there was only silence. He tried kicking at the foot-thick steel doors, but there was no response. It came to him that in the heart of a great city, with its teeming millions, he was as completely sealed away as a dead man in a tomb.

After a time his lungs began demanding deep full breaths. Later he began gulping, his pulse stepped up to 100, and he became conscious of a stuffiness that developed into a sense of suffocation. He guessed he had been entombed for an hour now; there must be scant oxygen left in the hole.

His fingers bit into the palms of his hands as he fought down a new attack of nerves. His strength was sapping; he was panting for air now. His thoughts centered upon his duty. There was some comfort in the thought that he had left a trail behind him. He reminded himself that he would die in the line of duty, just as Boll had died at San Antonio. Others would take up where he left off; Flagwill would exploit this spy nest until the last coalition spy was in arrest.

But there was Fincke. He remembered there had been no time to report to Flagwill details of last night's meeting with the Austrian. What implications lay behind Fincke's cryptic statement that his next move meant the biggest card in Van Hassek's whole bag of tricks?

Benning got out pencil and note-book. His fingers groped across the unseen pages as he wrote down, word by word, his rendezvous with Fincke. Wednesday, which was the day after tomorrow, he was to have met Fincke for the mysterious voyage from Pier 20. With an extreme effort at coordination he held onto his ebbing wits while he wrote. Not until he had recorded the pertinent details of Fincke's trail did he yield. His head was throbbing, his chest heaving.

The pencil dropped from his nerveless fingers. A whim of tormented imagination associated his heaving chest with that of a broken-winded horse he had ridden years ago in the 11th infantry. His throat gasped a delirious chuckle at the phantasy. He had a sense of slipping off into space and made an effort to rally against it; then his mind floated off into the black void of nothingness.

OUT in the offices of the Andes Gold Mining and Milling Company a blunt new crew had taken over, headed by Lt. Colonel Wallace, corps area intelligence officer. Three of Wallace's officers were checking through the records, three others were standing guard over four glum prisoners. The colonel himself was busy with an inquisition.

In a corner of the office, covered by a rug, lay the body of Backropp. A bullet from Wallace's pistol had been needed to end Backropp's resistance.

"All right, Oldfer," Wallace threatened the cowering fat man who sat in front of him. "I'll give you one more chance to remember the combination to that safe. If you do remember, I'll make it an internment camp; if you don't I'll have you hanged inside a week! Out with it!"

"Why not let me choke it out of him, Colonel?" demanded Lieutenant Hill, G-2 assistant.

Oldfer gave another glance at Backropp's body and was shaken by a convulsive shudder. Stoutly he had denied having had any visitor prior to the Wallace raid, or of having the combination of the safe whence faint sounds had come to the sharp ears of a noncom twenty minutes ago.

The telephone rang. An officer answered, and after a brief conversation came up to Colonel Wallace.

"Here's one for you, sir," the officer reported. "A man on the telephone wants to know what today's price is on

Palacio Nacional and Silver Saber shares. What's the answer?"

"Tell him," Wallace said, "that Mr. Salvatore wishes him to come here personally and at once."

Oldfer had been hanging to a desperate hope of establishing his own full innocence of the Andes' company's undercover operations. Against Wallace's threats was the clammy fear of Van Hassek's reprisal against traitors. He twisted and turned in the turmoil of indecision.

"The safe makers will be here any minute, then we'll not need your help," Wallace warned. He lifted his wrist to his eyes and glanced at the time. "I'll give you exactly thirty seconds more to decide whether you live or hang."

Ten seconds had passed when the office door opened. Safe experts reported in to tackle the job of opening the vault. Oldfer was jolted by the knowledge that if the man in the vault emerged alive the jig was up with him.

"I'll open it," he cried, leaping to his feet. "I'll open the safe, if you promise me I don't hang for it!"

Oldfer fairly raced to the steel doors and nervously fingered the combination. In his excitement, three trials were necessary to complete the combination. Colonel Wallace seized the door and pulled it open. Benning was lying on the floor, his right hand clutching a small pocket note-book.

Wallace lifted the unconscious man to a sofa. A medical officer, who had been hurried in from Governor's island, took pulse and temperature and applied stimulants. Benning opened his eyes and, staring at the whirling gray world about him, attempted to sit up.

"The captain will be all right shortly," the doctor predicted. "It's just as well you got him out of there without much more delay."

HALF an hour later Benning insisted on getting to his feet. His legs were wobbly under him; the slow, steady throb of his pulse reverberated in aching temples. But he waved the medico aside and went into the office where Wallace and his men were working.

Col. Wallace was effervescent. "The Andes Gold Mining and Milling Company," he exclaimed, "is the most valuable mine in the world right now. We're headed for the biggest spy roundup in history."

"Where's Bravot?" Benning wanted to know. "Bravot—Salvatore."

The glow of Wallace's face vanished into gloom. "Pretty bad luck, Benning," he said heavily. "He managed to slip out his private door as we entered. I had Lieutenant Crane guarding the hall. Salvatore killed him with a bullet and caught to catch a cage down before we could get out there."

The room swam again under the throbbing in his brain. Benning pulled himself together and nodded dazedly.

"Don't let it worry you too much," Wallace offered. "We're putting a net over the country. He'll need magic to escape. When you feel up to it, Colonel Flagwill wants you to call him at the War Department."

Benning checked through the mags of records. There was no need of cryptographers on the job. In a false bottom of Bravot's desk, Wallace had unearthed a code book which unlocked the symbols. It was merely a matter of compiling a new record and organizing the haul of enemy agents in arsenals, factories, proving grounds, military and naval headquarters, newspapers and propaganda bureaus.

The first estimates showed seventeen thousand cards of stockholders. Many of these were innocent purchasers, Wallace thought from the first results of his check, but there was evidence of thousands of enemy agents, scattered in important posts and positions throughout the United States.

An hour later Benning went to the McAlpin. His legs still lacked strength and he took a cab for the short ride. Upstairs in his room he called Flagwill.

"Glad you're all right, Benning. You had us worried!" Flagwill exclaimed. "A great piece of work, simply great! I've sent in your name to be a major in the new national army."

"You heard that Bravot and Boggio got away?"

"Sorry about that. Too bad about

Crane—a fine youngster. Well, we've got to get used to that sort of thing. How long will it take you to finish up in New York?"

"It's important, sir," Benning said, "that I leave here right away. I've another follow-up which sounds very important. On Fincke."

"Report back as soon as you feel like traveling." Flagwill's voice trailed into gravity. "Things are looking pretty black right now, and we've got to find out what's ahead of us. General Hague suggested—well, if you think you've a chance at it, he thought you might learn something—in Mexico. Of course, we'll let you decide."

"Very good, sir," Benning said. "I'll report in Washington on the first plane I can get."

COLONEL FLAGWILL was asleep at his desk when Benning reported at the War Department in mid-afternoon. The G-2 chief woke with a start and vigorously shook himself into full wakefulness.

He scowled at his watch and said, "Five minutes gone. That's the longest stretch of sleep I've had in a week." After a quick inspection of Benning, he added, "You don't look much the worse for wear."

"A trifle wobbly in the legs, sir," Benning said. "By tomorrow I'll be as good as new."

"You certainly went to town!" Flagwill exclaimed. "We've already ordered the prompt arrest of all Andes stockholders, innocent and guilty alike. That means the biggest spy roundup in history. We can separate sheep from goats after we've arrested the whole lot. Now is no time for half measures."

Benning said, "I'm sorry Bravot got away, sir."

"He'll be a magician," Flagwill vowed grimly, "if he gets through the nets we've laid for him. But right now we've got something bigger than that to worry about, and I'm going to put it up to you."

Flagwill sat up briskly, his face somber.

"My own theory," he went on, "is that Van Hassek's attack is the first move in a diversion. Next will come raids by enemy fleets on our Atlantic coast, in order to draw at least part of our fleet from the Pacific. If that succeeds, we can expect an invasion in force of our entire Pacific coast. All the signs point to just that."

"Any confirmation from Europe, sir?" Benning inquired.

"No. Europe is a cauldron of hot reports, denials and confusion. Berlin, Rome and Madrid pretend to disavow Van Hassek and the fleet in the Mediterranean. Because these forces fly the saber flag, we're supposed to swallow the flimsy fiction that insubordinate militarists have taken violence into their own hands. Tokio has a similar pretext to explain troop and transport concentrations on the China coast. This whole thing is a new war technique. The mask will come off just as soon as the coalition powers are ready to strike their vital blow."

"I take it, sir," Benning deducted, "that's what you wish me to go to Mexico City to find out."

Flagwill nodded. "Of course, you're the one to decide whether you have a chance."

"I'm willing to take my chances," Benning said. "But I hope I can have time first to wind up my date with Fincke."

In pertinent detail Benning outlined the case of the Austrian spy.

Flagwill ruminated. "I might have Fincke followed and we could put some men on the job at the ship's destination."

"But I'm in Fincke's confidence, sir," Benning argued. He made a quick calculation and added, "It'd not take long if I went aboard with Fincke, got the lay of things, and you had the Navy pick up the ship. We might, at least, land some important spies."

"That's an idea," Flagwill decided promptly. "We'll proceed on that basis. The day following, you'll be able to take a plane south and bail out at night over Mexico City."

As Flagwill turned back to his littered desk, his eye fell upon a pencilled memorandum. He looked up sharply at Benning.

"I've just found another little chore for you—to sit in on a very secret party row over the successor to the Presidency." Flagwill lowered his voice and spoke rapidly. "As if a war wasn't bad enough without having a President and Vice President die within a week of each other. There's a sweet row in the Cabinet, a partisan intrigue to force Senator Tannard, Secretary of State, out of the line of succession. It all hinges on the fact that Tannard received an interim appointment from the President last fall, when Secretary Hinges died. Tannard has not yet been confirmed by the Senate. The Tannard appointment, as you well know, was one of the President's strangest acts, and was never forgiven by the party war horses. As senator, Tannard was a minority party leader and opponent of the President in the Senate, but the President overlooked all that because of Tannnard's brilliant legal mind and knowledge of international law and relations, which was of great value in the present complicated world.

"Now if Congress rejects Tannard's appointment, the Presidency falls by law to Judge Baucom, Secretary of the Treasury. Since Baucom is party leader and wheel horse, it is likely that a swift party coup will bring this about, as Tannard may not want to make a fight for his confirmation under all the circumstances. Baucom himself has called the conference, which sounds significant. Baucom is our friend and will let you sit in as General Hague's representative."

THERE was a gloomy, almost spectral atmosphere in the war department as Benning sauntered down through the long, wide corridors of the Munitions Building. Through the acrid pall of tobacco smoke officers moved from office to office or hung over desks and maps with the slow, even deliberation of automatons.

Benning felt the strain of it in the very air about him. Several hundred officers were grouped in innumerable technical huddles and conferences. Through day and night they drove to the limit of their energies over the tangled skeins of unreadiness that they must patiently untangle and fashion into the orderly pattern of a national defense.

G-2 had been expanded into a great beehive. A thousand reserve officers had been called in the first expansion of Military Intelligence. A survey of the shifting moods of the public mind must be kept current. A public relations service must be immediately expanded to keep liaison with the press throughout the country. A propaganda service was under way to help shape public opinion and emotions. Volunteering must be stimulated by means of radio, press and public speakers. The draft must be popularized preliminary to the drawing of as many millions of men as might be needed in event serious invasion developed.

In all the military sections similar staff conferences and activity were in motion. There were problems of supply, of weapons and munitions, of mobilizing industry for the manufacture of war materials, of providing for an adequate army and training and equipping it to meet the invader.

Benning knew that academic preparation had been made for all this, the processes duly listed on paper. But now, with the first invader inside the gate, the transition from paper plans to actuality was a long and costly process. Inefficiencies, extravagances, costly delays could not be avoided.

There recurred again in Benning's mind the sneers of Van Hassek at Mexico City.

In the great war our Allies had led us by the hand, furnished us with advisers, with artillery, helmets, gas masks, tanks, planes and impedimenta of war. They had held the common enemy on a line three thousand miles distant through fifteen months until the United States was ready to fire its first shot.

Now we were on our own. Months must elapse before we could prepare an army to expel even the invasion of Van Hassek's forces.

There was no one now to sell us equipment. There was no alternative to taking heavy losses in men while belated factories slowly forged the blade of a modern sword.

ON reaching Capitol Hill a few minutes before four o'clock Benning passed the house chamber, went downstairs, and took the tunnel-trolley across to the Senate office building. Congress was stricken by the high tension that gripped the whole country, and its excited members gave the impression of an ant hill disrupted by disaster.

Members, although recessed for the day after a brief emergency session, remained about the Capitol building in grave or excited groups, reading fragmentary dispatches from the attack now at its height in Texas, discussing courses of action, criticising the army for its present impotence, threatening dire vengeance against the invaders. Eastern representatives were already forming a bloc, regardless of party, to force naval protection from the Pacific to the Atlantic coast in the light of the Mediterranean threat.

The selected Senators, leaders of the party in power, were just arriving when Benning reached the Baucom conference room and was admitted by a Baucom secretary. Secretary Baucom rose promptly when the door closed on the last of those he had summoned. Baucom was a large man, square-faced, straight-lipped, with friendly, level gray eyes. His lined, ruddy face, white hair and broad stooped shoulders revealed his seventy-odd years, the past thirty of them spent in the senate and public service.

"Friends, there will be a slight delay," Baucom said abruptly. His eyes ran slowly from face to face. "I have just sent for Secretary Tannard."

Benning saw an interchange of astonished glances among those present and felt his own brows knot at Baucom's astounding anouncement. Tannard long had been known as the particular political foe of Senator Baucom.

"While we are waiting, gentlemen," Baucom went on, "I've a proposal to make. I think we should arrange at once a suitable memorial to that fine young officer, Captain Boll. We have built a shrine to the Unknown Soldier, now I think we should build one to honor our Known Soldier. The example so lately set the country by Captain Boll is a fine reminder of the true meaning of duty in an emergency. It suggests to me that a suitable memorial be erected at once in Arlington as a symbol of the spirit of service and the intrepid valor of our young manhood upon which we must depend wholly for our future as a people. I implore you to think this proposition over, gentlemen. I propose immediately to introduce suitable legislation."

"Pardon me, sir!" a nettled voice interrupted.

Senator Vren, veteran Senate leader, was on his feet. In his taut face was reflected the prevalent astonishment at Baucom's invitation to Tannard.

"Necessity brings us here this afternoon," he said, "the necessity of agreeing upon a man to lead our nation. That necessity was forced on us by the untimely disaster of the death of our President which followed so shortly the death of our Vice President of a heart attack. The decision of those now in this room will carry with it weight enough in Congress to be fully effective in deciding the whole question without any need of consulting extraneous persons. I see no occasion for admitting Senator Tannard to our confidence, and therefore I must object to his presence."

Baucom faced Vren with cold, level eyes.

"My reason for asking Tannard here," he said in a low, determined voice, "is I consider him the man best qualified among all of us to lead the country through our present crisis."

Vren stood with mouth agape. The room was stricken by tense silence. Vren shortly found his voice and spoke with slow, incisive deliberation as he shaped his words.

"Please be informed, sir, that I consulted the majority opinion before we came here. Therefore I speak their opinion as well as my own when I inform you, sir, that it is your distinguished self we intend to name President of the United States, and this by the simple method of disqualifying Secretary Tannard. By record, by geography, by every logical situation as we look ahead to the next election, you are the one—"

Baucom's face softened, but he slowly shook his massive head.

"I appreciate the honor you pay me, Vren," he interrupted. "But we face an emergency, gentlemen, in which men are going to surrender their lives to their sense of duty, just as Captain Boll did. That makes it very easy for me to surrender so small a thing as my personal ambition.

"From now on we must resolve to smash party considerations. Our national crisis is serious enough without divisions among ourselves. I must set a personal example and confess to you frankly that I am too old and lack the vigor and, frankly, the abilities that are needed at this time."

"BAUCOM, you've allowed yourself to become overwrought!" Vren fairly shouted. "It is for your associates and friends to pass upon your capacities, sir! Please be advised that I shall insist upon having you succeed to the presidency. As for the hopeless reactionary you have just proposed, the very mention of his name is intolerable to me, sir! I shall never permit myself to vote for his confirmation."

Fire leaped into Baucom's gray eyes.

"I'll be the judge of whether I'm fit or not!" he roared, launching the type of Baucom attack that had crushed opposition through crises of more than a decade. "I've just told you that politics are abolished for the duration of the war! My voice will rise to the public against any public servant who dares challenge that principle. Yes, I pledge myself to crush any man, friend or foe, who stands in the way of duty as opposed to partisan politics during the present emergency!"

He paused a moment, his eyes fixed defiantly on Vren, then he went on in a milder voice.

"If your minds, gentlemen, are free of purely partisan prejudices, you will not challenge my proposal of Tannard for president. Tannard has comparative youth and vigor. As Secretary of State, while he is new in that position, he is the lawful successor, unless we disqualify him on mere technicality. He commanded a battalion in the World War and was decorated for bravery. That is only one aspect of his character. He made a brilliant success in his profession. He has had his years in the Senate and has been reasonably liberal. He has brains and guts and he has both feet on the ground. He is the man we need to lead us in this emergency, and I intend to do everything within my power looking to his confirmation."

Baucom broke off and his eyes searched each face again as if seeking challenge to the words he had spoken. Only a stunned silence met him. His eyes lifted and a friendly smile wreathed his face as the door of the conference room opened.

A tall, erect man stood at the door, gravely hesitant.

"Come right on in, Tannard," Baucom invited. He stepped forward to extend a congratulatory hand and his smile widened as he added without formality, "I hope your heart is in good shape to stand a hard shock, Senator. But the gentlemen present wish you to serve as President of the United States. Your confirmation will be voted without serious opposition."

Tannard's alert eyes searched the room. He was a man of fifty, physically fit, appearing much younger than his age. His face was angular, strong featured. Tannard looked the born leader of men, man of action governed by an active, orderly mind.

In his steel blue eyes there showed no gleam of personal triumph at Baucom's announcement. His emotional response was a tightening of the muscles of his jaw, a drawing erect of his wide shoulders

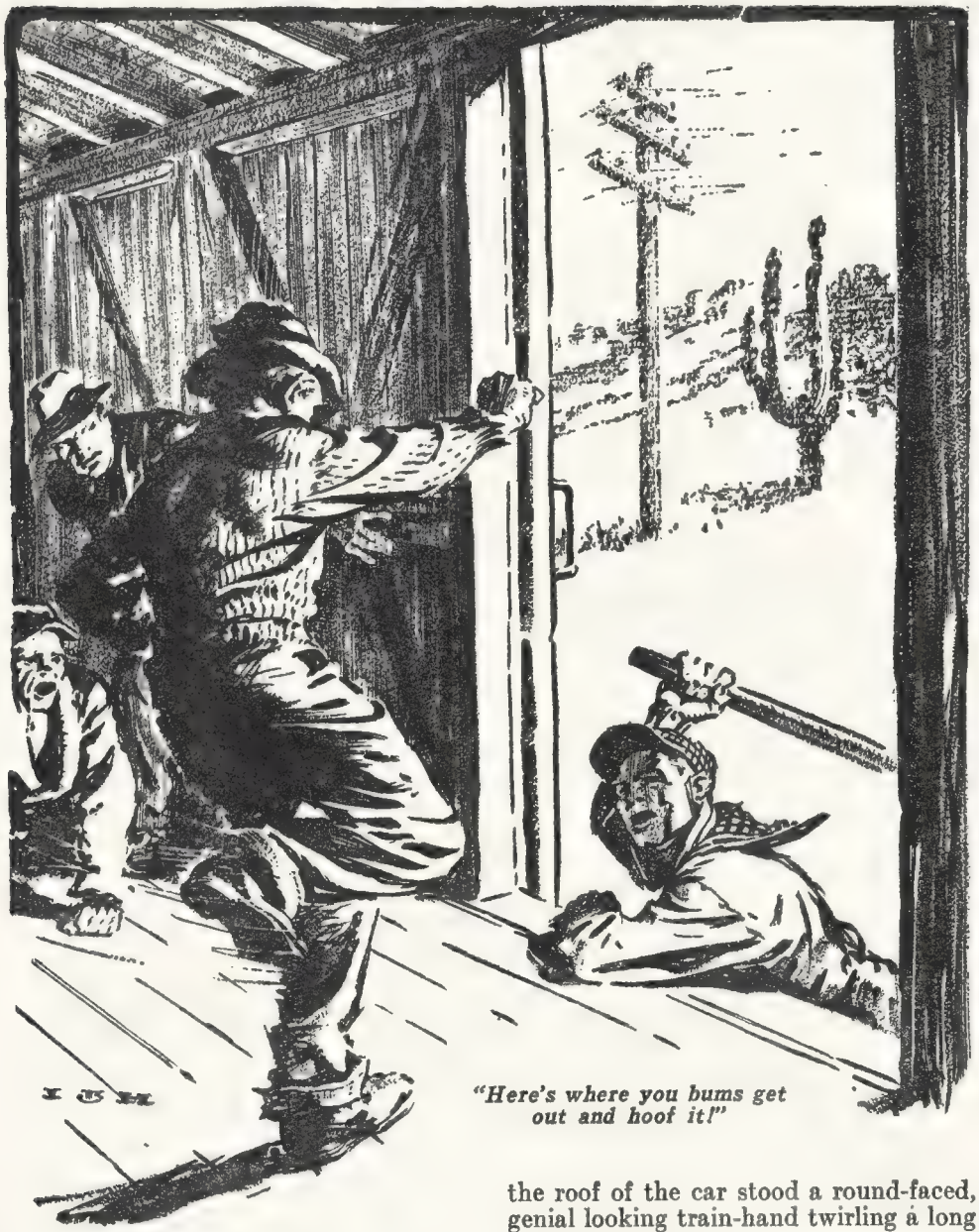
Tannard gave his answer in a measured voice.

"Very good, gentlemen. If that is your decision, I accept. Forgive me if I have no platitudes of gratitude to offer, nor promises of performance. I will say only that I deeply deplore the unhappy circumstance that brings about my succession to the Presidency. If your position be confirmed by the Senate I will do my best, and I will expect the fullest support from you and from every American. If there is nothing further, gentlemen, I'll excuse myself."

(To be concluded)

SKOOD RIDES HIS LUCK

BY H·H·KNIBBS



"Here's where you bums get out and hoof it!"

HIS long overcoat flapping about his legs, Skood slunk along the the freight, looking for an empty box car. He discovered one and was about to climb in when he heard a voice. "Where do you think you're goin', Pee-Wee?"

Skood glanced around, then up. On the roof of the car stood a round-faced, genial looking train-hand twirling a long brake-stick.

With a snort of disgust Skood started to walk away.

"I said, where do you think you're goin', Pee-Wee?"

"My name ain't Pee-Wee, you big stiff. I was going to El Paso, till you came along and flattened the deal."

The brakeman grinned. "You ought to

paste a stamp on yourself and drop yourself into a mail box. You'd get by, all right."

"I ought to paste a mitt on your mug. If you think I wouldn't, just climb down."

The train-hand climbed down, somewhat surprised that Skood didn't run.

"For a little guy, you got plenty guts," he declared. "I didn't say you couldn't ride. I asked you where you were goin'."

"I got to get to El Paso, somehow. Honest, mister, I ain't no bum."

"Who said you was?" chuckled the train-hand. "Go on! Climb in, and keep out of sight. But I'm tellin' you if you got any friends bushin' around, expectin' to hop this freight, they're in for a long walk."

"Thanks, mister. I'm playing a lone hand."

Skood pulled a worn photograph from his pocket and handed it to the brakeman. "That's me, on Searchlight. Mebby you heard of him?"

As the brakeman seemed interested, Skood told him much of his early history as a jockey, his successes and his failures. To pour his troubles into a sympathetic ear was a new experience. He forgot where he was and where he was going.

The brakeman told him about the country south, warned him that it was tough country for hobos and crooks, and presently glanced at his watch.

"It's about time we pulled out," he said. "See you later."

Skood climbed into the empty and settled himself. That train-hand was sure a white man. Skood concluded that, all things considered, he was sitting pretty. And the brakeman, who had said he lived part of the time in Las Cruces, had invited him to drop in if he got down that way, and talk horses. Not since he had left the East had Skood received such a genial invitation.

With a grunt and rattle the train pulled out. Skood took off his overcoat, folded it and sat on it. The floor of the box car wasn't any sofa, if anybody should ask you. A small, raffish figure in his faded sport suit and checkered cap, Skood gazed out at the New Mexico landscape. It was queer country, with its sagebrush, greasewood and sand. The distant hills looked as if they were made out of cardboard. Skood wondered if Texas would be like that.

WHEN the southbound freight reached Socorro, two hobos barged into the empty, seemed surprised to find someone in the car. He heard the smaller of the two call the other Shike. Skood watched them from the corner of his eye. If they weren't jail-birds, he was a goldfish. The hobos kept to themselves until the freight had passed Las Cruces, when the big hobo in the red sweater sidled up to Skood. "Say, cully, how about handin' out one of them smokes?"

As Skood reached in his pocket for his cigarettes, the hobo launched a kick at him that would have crippled him for life. But Skood had been on his guard all along. He dodged and grabbed the hobo's ankle. The hobo crashed down, bounded up again like a football. Skood met his rush with a straight poke in the nose. He managed to get in one or two more stiff jolts when the other hobo slipped behind him and grabbed him round the waist. The big hobo hauled off and swung. Skood went down.

They were going through Skood's pockets when with a grinding of suddenly-set brakeshoes the freight stopped. Footsteps sounded on the roof of the box car. Skood's friend, the brakeman, dropped to the ground, appeared in the doorway.

"What's the matter with the little guy?" he said, glancing at Skood on the floor.

"Sick," growled the big hobo.

"Well, here's where you two bums get out and hoof it. The little guy can ride."

Skood stood up.

"They ganged on me," he told the brakeman. "That big stiff there—"

As the brakeman started to climb into the car the big hobo kicked at his face. The train-hand swung his brake stick, caught the hobo across the shins. Backing into a corner of the car, the hobo pulled a gun.

"Look out!" cried Skood.

The hobo fired. The brakeman crumpled up and dropped his stick. With a

snarl the big hobo fired again, missed Skood by inches. Skood jumped from the car and began to run.

Sharp, impatient blasts came from the engine whistle. The man in the red sweater picked up the brakeman's cap, and stepping to the doorway, waved his arm. The freight began to move.

Out of breath, Skood stopped, looking back, saw the hobos heave the brakeman out of the car. He fell close to the rail, rose, staggered and went under the wheels. Skood felt sick to his stomach.

"Get going!" he told himself. "You didn't ride the rattlers from Albuquerque. You hoofed it. Find water and wash your mug. Comb the train grit out of your hair. You think you're Jack Skood. You ain't. You're Overcoat Johnny the bum, and you're mixed up in a murder."

Appalled by the tragedy, fearful of the empty miles of sage and sand, Skood didn't know which way to turn. But he would have to keep going, find a road somewhere. As he hesitated, he reached in his pocket for a cigarette. The hobos had cleaned him. Pocket knife, comb, loose change, cigarettes, and the photograph of himself and Searchlight and the floral wreath were gone. Fumbling in his overcoat pocket on the chance of finding a loose cigarette, his fingers encountered a small, round something. He stared in bewilderment as he drew it out —a heavily engraved ring set with a big solitaire diamond.

"They planted that ring on me," Skood told himself. "I was to be the fall guy if we got pinched riding the freight." He glanced round apprehensively. Were the hobos still on the train, or had they taken to the brush?

HALF an hour later Skood stumbled into a desert road. A good coating of white dust would be his best alibi. As he stubbed down the middle of the road, wondering where it would lead, he became conscious of a soft plodding behind him. His imagination pictured the hobos following him. He had seen them kill the brakeman. Skood wanted to run, but he feared that they would shoot him in the back. Enraged by his helplessness, he slipped his hand into his overcoat pocket, took the ring between thumb and forefinger and flicked it into the brush. They might get him, but they wouldn't get the ring.

"Going somewhere?"

Skood swung round. A tall, bony man sat a big thoroughbred. The man's eyes were hard and questioning. Skood gulped, stared at the horse. He hadn't seen many thoroughbreds in New Mexico.

"Well, what do you think of him?" said the tall man, his voice a shade less harsh.

"He wouldn't get away any too quick," replied Skood. "But once he got going, all hell couldn't stop him."

The tall man stepped down from his horse. "Turn around. Got a gun in that overcoat?"

Seemingly satisfied with his inspection, the tall man said casually, "Picked this up over near the railroad. Know anything about it?"

Skood stared at the photograph of Searchlight and himself, taken the day he had won twenty thousand at Andover. There was no use trying to lie to this guy.

"It's me and Searchlight," Skood stammered.

"Jockey, eh?"

"I put Searchlight under the wire for twenty thousand—"

The tall man glanced at the date on the photograph. "That was five years ago. What you been doing since then?"

"Riding my luck, mostly. Listen, mister, I don't know who you are, but I ain't no crook. I was on a freight. A couple of bums hopped her at Socorro. They ganged on me and cleaned me. That's how they got that photograph."

Under the tall man's gaze, Skood felt as if he were being turned inside out.

"The fella in the red sweater did it," he blurted.

"Did what?" The tall man's voice was like a pistol shot.

Skood floundered. "The brakeman said I could ride. He was throwing those bums off when the guy in the red sweater shot him."

Somehow, the tall man didn't seem surprised. "What did you do?"

"God!" Skood cried, "do you think I would kill a guy for letting me ride?"

"Suppose you tell me all about it," said the tall man.

Skood took a deep breath. "Are you a cop?"

"So they say."

"Well listen, mister. I'm a stranger in this country. I ain't looking for trouble. All I want is to get by."

"All right. Go ahead with your story."

Skood recounted his fight with the hobos, and the killing of the friendly brakeman. The tall man was gazing out across the wasteland toward the railroad.

"How did Joe get under the wheels?" he asked abruptly.

Skood shivered. The tall man must have seen the body. "They swung him, and let him go. I had quit running, and turned around—"

"What did you stop for, back yonder, before you hit the road?"

"I was going through my clothes for a cigarette."

"Is that all?"

"That's all, mister."

The tall man began to search through the roadside brush. Presently he came back and thrust out his hand. "Was Joe Donahue wearing this ring when you bums jumped him?"

Skood's mouth twitched. "You mean the brakeman? He didn't wear no ring. Would a train-hand be wearing a big diamond like that?"

With a stroke so swift he couldn't dodge it the tall man slapped Skood's face. Skood staggered, caught his balance. "You big stiff! Put up your mitts and I'll knock your dam' block off!"

"Mebby," said the tall man, "now that you're mad you can think straight. You said a hobo called Shike shot Joe Donahue—that he and the other bum dropped Joe under the wheels. Now give it to me again, and get it straight."

When Skood had finished telling his story again, the tall man nodded. He seemed to be talking to himself. "Joe played plenty poker. Sometimes one of the boys would go broke and put up his watch or his ring. Joe had a particular fancy for diamonds." The tall man turned to Skood. "Now when you bums jumped on Joe—"

"I'm telling you, mister, all the jumping I did was out of the car. If you want to believe it, all right. If you don't, you can go to hell."

"Where are you headed for?"

"El Paso. I'm looking for a job."

"Got any money on you?"

"A lousy ten spot. It's in the toe of my shoe. They didn't get that."

"All right. When you get to El Paso, you might hunt up Charley Price. You'll find him at Whiting's Livery. Tell him I said to give you a job."

"You kidding me?"

"Not any. You said Joe used you white. He would do that. The fellas that got him are headed for Texas. That's off my range, just now. But you're goin' down to El Paso and try to locate 'em."

"Hell, I ain't no cop."

"All the better. Now get this. Charley Price will give you a job. When you get located, hang around the dumps in Juarez and keep your eye peeled. If you see those birds, telegraph me at Las Cruces."

"All right, mister. Who will I send it to?"

A queer look flashed across the man's face. "Make it Garrett—Pat Garrett."

There wasn't a bindle stiff from Chicago to San Francisco that hadn't heard of Pat Garrett. Single-handed he had made the wild bunch in Albuquerque drop their tails and leave town. Skood recalled that the brakeman in the Albuquerque freight yards had mentioned Garrett as his friend, that he was a square shooter.

Skood was footloose for the time being. But there was a string to his freedom. He thought he could cut it. "How about putting the El Paso cops wise, if I spot Shike?"

"Don't talk to the El Paso police. Telegraph me at Las Cruces!"

Skood jumped as if he had been hit. "All right, mister. I'm on my way."

Garrett mounted his horse. "You can make it to Montoya before sundown. Watch your step down around Juarez. Keep your mouth shut. And don't pack a gun."

With his overcoat on his arm Skood trudged down the desert road. Pat Garrett was a great guy. But wasn't that a

hell of a way to turn a man loose! Just teeter down to El Paso, push your face into the dumps in Juarez, and get your head beat off, or croaked with a gun.

THE following afternoon, from the high seat of a freighter's wagon, Skood had his first glimpse of El Paso—sand hills, scattered adobes, a muddy river with crumbling banks, a freight yard, and a bunch of cattle bawling down a dusty road. He gave the freighter a dollar, scrambled down and set out to find Whiting's livery.

A small man, with a bald head and quizzical eyebrows, Charley Price was out in the alley, cuffing down a steel-gray pony when Skood arrived at the livery. Introducing himself, Skood delivered Garrett's message. Price asked him what kind of a horse Garrett was riding. Skood described the thoroughbred.

"All right," said Price. "Get a fork and clean out that second stall."

Stable hand! And he had put more good ones under the wire for big money than any jock in America. But after all, this was only the handle to his real job. Skood shucked his overcoat and went to work.

The following evening Skood wandered down a broad street of open front saloons, hot dog stands, shooting galleries and moving picture theatres. Soldiers in khaki, cowhands, Mexicans, loafed up and down the street. This, he told himself, was a preliminary canter. He didn't expect to see Shike among these people. Yet his eye was ever alert for a burly figure in a red sweater. He poked into several tough saloons, glanced down dark alleys, and finally returned to the stable. Next time he would start earlier and take a longer look.

Several evening later, while Skood was standing in the doorway of a cheap lodging house, trying to make up his mind to tackle Juarez and give it the once over, a man wearing a red sweater lurched out of a saloon, saw Skood and asked him if he would stake him to a feed. With a glance at the tear in the shoulder of the sweater, Skood invited the bum to have a drink. It cost Skood four bits to learn that the bum had been given the sweater by a bo he had met over near the river.

"They were sheddin' their clothes and climbin' into new outfits," continued the bum. "I got a laugh out of it when the skinny guy with the cough called the other guy lousy. All them blanket stiffs are lousy."

In his eagerness to find out more about them, Skood overplayed his hand. "Seen 'em around town lately?"

The bum's water eyes narrowed.

"Who the hell are you?" he said truculently.

"I'm the fella that's buying the drinks," said Skood. "Maybe you forgot." Turning his back on the bum, he shuffled out. He had crowded the man in the red sweater into the rail just as they were coming into the stretch—put him out of the running. Snorting his disgust, Skood was standing near the curb, wondering what to do next, when he heard the sound of a scuffle behind him. Two huskies, plain-clothes men in big hats, had collared the bum and were fetching him out of the saloon.

"I ain't done nothin'," whined the bum. "I'm tellin' you a guy give it to me."

Skood had a hunch that it was time to kick his feet out of the stirrups and jump. He had started to cross the street when he heard the bum cry out, "That's the guy! The little guy in the overcoat!"

SKOOD dashed across the street and ducked into an alley. He barged into a dim figure that squealed *"Policia!"* It also began to run. Diving into a dark stairway entrance, Skood held his breath as one of the plain-clothes men thudded past, hot after the fleeing Mexican. Skood backed slowly up the stairs. If the police nabbed him they would put him through the mill. His story would get him a big laugh, might even get him strung up for murder. That bum would swear to anything to save himself.

From down in the alley came a shrill jabbering. Evidently the cops had caught the Mexican. Creeping on up the stairs, Skood flattened himself against a

door. With a rusty creak it gave suddenly. He stumbled backward, found himself in an unlighted room. He heard the scuffle of feet, knew that someone else was in the room. Yet no one challenged him. Stealthily a window was raised. Evidently someone was making a quick get away by the window. Skood caught his breath as he heard footsteps on the stairs. He stole toward the open window. A few feet below lay a flat roof. Overhead were clotheslines. The well of a stairway showed dimly in the middle of the roof.

Skood climbed out, made for the trap door stairway, and descending, found himself in another alley, dark, dismal and smelling of refuse. He crouched down beside an empty barrel, became aware of muffled footsteps down the alley. The footsteps drew nearer. Next thing a cop would flash his torch and it would be all off. But the next thing happened to be a voice—a sort of harsh whisper that made Skood's scalp crawl. "They picked up the bum. Somebody must have put 'em wise to that sweater."

"And dam' near landed us!" whined another voice.

"The dicks are chasin' the little guy in the overcoat, you dope! Come on. We're headin' back to Juarez."

There was no mistaking either of the voices. Skood held his breath. If they happened to spot him. . . .

"Come on! What's bitin' you!"

"Juarez? Not me. Listen, Shike. El Paso is lousy with dicks lookin' for the guy that croaked that brakeman. If you keep on bullin' around this town they'll land you, sure as hell! I got a tip that there's an undercover guy workin' in Jurarez right now. I'm headin' for the coast."

Skood heard Shike say in a suspiciously mild voice, "Then why don't you get goin'?"

The whine in Lousy's voice became a snarl. "How about my split? You been holdin' out on me ever since we pulled that Lakeside Drive job."

"You want your split, eh? All right. Take it!"

A scream, a muffled shot, and footsteps sped down the alley. Skood started up, shuddered as his hand encountered something soft and sticky. He stood blinking in the sudden circle of a flashlight. A stocky figure in a big hat was coming towards him.

"Stay right where you are!" said the stocky man.

A second officer appeared, flashed his light on the body lying near the barrel. "Looks like the little guy beefed his pardner," he said.

"You better get the wagon and pack the stiff up to headquarters," said the officer who had arrested Skood.

"Listen, mister. I didn't kill that guy."

"Sure! He beefed himself," said the plain-clothes man. "Come on. We'll take a little walk." Taking Skood's arm, he marched him around to the alley he had recently left, and up to the room with the open window. The flashlight disclosed dust, cobwebs. There was no furniture. There was not even a knob or latch on the door. Evidently the place had been untenanted for a long time.

Skood admitted that he had been in the room and tried to explain the circumstances.

"Who were those other birds?"

Skood gave their names and described them. He hadn't been with them. He had been looking for them. They were wanted for murdering a brakeman on the Santa Fe.

"I ain't killed nobody!" cried Skood desperately.

"Well," said the plain-clothes man, "you better wash your hands before you tell that to the chief."

Skood glanced at his hands, shuddered. "Listen, mister. I didn't have no gun. I never killed nobody. But if them guys had got a chance they would have croaked me. My name is Skood, Jack Skood. Mebby you've heard of me. I put Searchlight under the wire for twenty thousand—"

"Sure! And now you're ridin' a lame horse in the Hobo's Handicap. Come on, Jack."

IN THE dive where he had talked with the bum in the red sweater, Skood admitted having bought drinks for him, but said he had never seen him before.

"Sure! And you never seen the sweater before," declared the plain-clothes man. "There's something wrong with your eyes."

"My eyes are all right. A guy called Shike was wearing that sweater when he killed the Santa Fe brakeman. And he bumped off Lousy and made his getaway. You can't frame me for the job, you big stiff!"

The plain-clothes man laid a coin on the bar.

"Have a drink, Jack," he said in a friendly tone.

"I guess I was getting kind of track sour," said Skood. "What I mean, sawing my mouth and swing the bat don't get any speed out of me." His lean, mournful face drawn and haggard, Skood told of the south-bound freight, the two hobos, and the killing of the friendly brakeman. The plain-clothes man made no comment, but his searching eyes were worse than any question. Skood felt that his story, rather than clearing him, had only got him in deeper. He recalled Pat Garrett's "Don't talk to the El Paso police. Telegraph me at Las Cruces."

"What am I pinched for?" said Skood.

"Killing your pardner. Ain't that plenty?"

"Listen, mister. I can prove that I ain't in with them crooks. But I got to send a telegram first. It's to Pat Garrett. Las Cruces."

The plain-clothes man took hold of his arm. "That's the best one you have told yet."

Skood buttoned up his mouth. Talk was no good. He determined to make a break for liberty if he got even the ghost of a chance.

As if aware of Skood's intention, the officer snapped a handcuff on Skood's wrist, snapped the other cuff on his own. The officer stopped at a drug store and asked if he might use the telephone. That meant the police station. Skood's face grew white. He completely lost his head. As the plain-clothes man took down the receiver, Skood jerked the gun from the officer's holster.

Still holding the receiver to his ear, the plain-clothes man said quietly, "Put that gun back. Remember, if you pull the trigger, you're tied to me. You can't run."

"Oh hell!" said Skood. "Go ahead and telephone." A fellow couldn't shoot a guy with a nerve like that.

Skood was puzzled when, instead of making for the police station, the officer took him up the street and turned into the wide entrance of a stairway, brilliantly lighted. He was still more puzzled when they entered a large, garishly furnished gambling hall. A sleek man with black hair and a waxed mustache came up to them.

"Good evening, Bill," he said courteously. "What can I do for you?"

While the officer and the proprietor talked together, Skood gazed at the green topped tables, and the low hanging lights disclosing bronzed, rugged faces, and faces lined and white. A mixed crowd, quiet save for an occasional exclamation.

"He's busy, just now," the sleek man was saying. "But I think he'll see you."

Skood followed the officer into a small room filled with cigar smoke, where four men in their shirt sleeves sat at a round table. Skood stared at the tall, lean figure with the open vest and the heavy gold watch chain. It was Pat Garrett.

Garrett glanced up. "Well, Bill?"

"This fella," said the plain-clothes man, "has got something on his mind."

Garrett excused himself from the game. Curious glances followed him as, accompanied by the officer and Skood, he moved to the bar. Skood's lean face grew red as he heard Garrett say, "No, Bill. The little guy didn't kill him. He ain't got guts enough." Garrett gestured for another drink. A little later Skood heard him say, "As collector of customs, mebby I ought to keep out of this. But I'll take on the job. I owe it to Joe."

Skood knew nothing of Garrett's recent appointment as collector of customs at Juarez. As for the job mentioned, Skood surmised that that meant going after Shike, for having killed the brakeman. Still fearful that he would be put in jail, Skood came to a momentous decision. He wouldn't be shuffled around like a pea under a shell any longer. Garrett said that he didn't have guts. He would show them. He turned to Pat

Garrett. "Listen, mister. If you're going after that bird Shike, you want to be flat and trying. You never seen him. Now I've laid alongside of him on the back stretch and I know what he smells like. If you run me in, what good would I be doing sitting in the can with a bunch of drunks? You gave me a break once, and I made good. What I mean—give me a break now. If I fold up it won't be no hair off your hindquarters."

A gleam of humor lighted the ex-sheriff's eyes. "All right, Overcoat Johnny. You make the ride." And with a nod to the plain-clothes man to fetch Skood along, they descended the wide stairway.

Overcoat Johnny? Now where in hell had Garrett caught onto that moniker?

A FEW minutes later Skood was shuffling along beside Garrett, feeling like a lost dog that had suddenly found a master. Where they were going didn't matter. This tall, bony man with the lean face and the hard eye had rescued him from the dog catchers. Skood wanted to talk.

"That cop that pinched me," he said, "thinks I croaked that guy Lousy."

"How do you like Charley Price's quarter horse?" said Garrett.

"Say, mister, I was going to thank you for landing me that job. Peanut looks good for the quarter, but I haven't been on him yet."

They covered another block before Garrett spoke. "Well, don't enter your horse till you try him out. The officer that pinched you is Bill Donahue."

Garrett had said, out there in the desert, that the brakeman's name was Joe Donahue. There was more in this deal than Skood had suspected.

Passing the customs office south of the line, Garrett turned and walked west. They were in Juarez. Garrett smoked a cigar as they strode along. Presently they came to a squat adobe on the edge of town. Telling Skood to keep out of sight, Garrett knocked and was admitted.

As he waited in the shadow of the adobe, wondering what all this had to do with locating Shike, a shadow detached itself from the rear of the house and drifted across the sandy stretch west of the road. A few seconds later Garrett came out. In an excited whisper Skood told what he had seen.

"It wasn't Shike," said Garrett. "You say he headed for town. Well, here's your job. Follow him, but don't crowd him. Find out where he goes, and report to me. I'll be at that joint at the corner west of the bridge."

Some job! A strange town, a dark night, and no sign of the man he was supposed to follow. Across the vacant lot, down a dark street edged with low house, Skood hastened. He was halfway up to town, had given up hope of discovering anyone abroad at that late hour, when he caught a glimpse of a dim figure ahead. The figure swerved, seemed to disappear in the shadow of a long, low adobe. Uncertain as to whether the man had entered the house or had gone on through the unfenced yard to the next street, Skood decided to make a closer inspection. He was stealing along the side of the house, wondering where the man had gone, when a figure rose suddenly from the shadows. Skood started to run. His overcoat swung between his legs and tripped him. Something struck him on the back of the head.

The next thing he knew, he was lying on the floor of a whitewashed room. A short, weazened Mexican was leaning over him, a grin on his face. The light from a paper-shaded lamp fell upon two men seated at a table in the middle of the room. Dazed, Skood stared at the slender, elegantly clothed man with the dark, lean features and sharp mustache. Card man, thought Skood. The other—Skood raised on his elbow, glanced hopelessly toward the closed door. Shaved and garmented like an affluent east side plug ugly, Shike sat glaring at him.

"This," thought Skood, "is the finish." Somehow, Shike had learned that Garrett and he were in Juarez, and had laid a trap for them. It occurred to Skood that he was only a secondary consideration. Pat Garrett was the man they were after.

Shike filled a glass with whiskey. "Have a drink on the house," he said with counterfeit geniality. "You look like you're feelin' tough."

"Thanks, you big bum!" said Skood. "Go to hell!"

Shike kicked him in the ribs. Skood heard something crack, felt a stab of pain.

The elegantly clad man gestured gracefully. "I don't object to you bumping him off. But why mutilate him? He's no use to us if he can't talk." Silky drew up a chair and sat down. "Who was with you tonight when you came over to Juarez?"

Skood stared into the gambler's dark, emotionless eyes. "Nobody. I was alone, just looking around."

Silky smiled. "Was Pat Garrett with you?"

"I don't know Pat Garrett—never seen him."

Suave, affable, the gambler asked Skood if he had not gone to a Mexican's house with Garrett, earlier in the evening.

Stubbornly Skood disclaimed having been with anyone.

"You're a good little liar," said the gambler, "and you've got guts. If this was strictly my party, I'd feel inclined to turn you loose. But Shike seems to think you ought to disappear permanently."

Skood sat up, leaned back against the wall. His face white, his eyes baleful, he glared at his captors like a cornered cat. They would bump him off and probably dump his body into the river. But they couldn't make him tell where Garrett was. Garrett had given him a break. Now, strangely enough, he was giving Pat Garrett a break. But Garrett would never know it.

Shike got up, gestured to the Mexican. They were coming for him now. Skood gasped at a straw. "I saw Pat Garrett at Golden's, in El Paso, about an hour ago."

Silky and the Mexican exchanged glances.

"With Bill Donahue," said the card man. "And you came over to Juarez with Garrett, didn't you?"

"No. I came alone."

Shike jerked Skood to his feet, stripped off his overcoat and cap. The wizened Mexican put them on, and grinning, went out.

SKOOD sat down, his back against the wall. Shike began to pace up and down the room, occasionally glancing viciously at Skood.

"Sit down, Shike," said Silky. "You're nervous."

Cursing the gambler, Shike took a stiff drink, drew up to the table and fumbled a deck of cards. The card man taunted Shike about his nerve, seemed to be trying to pick a fight with him. Strangely enough, Shike remained stubbornly silent. The card man lighted a cigar, and leaning back in his chair, eyed Skood in a peculiar fashion. Skood was puzzled. He surmised that the Mexican had gone out to locate Pat Garrett. But the Mexican wouldn't show himself—he'd simply send a message by some acquaintance that Shike was at a certain house in Juarez. When the messenger said he had been told this by a little man in a cloth cap and a long overcoat, naturally Garrett would think that Skood had sent the message. Would Garrett fall for this frame-up?

A knock at the door brought them to their feet. The Mexican came in, said something in Spanish, and left hurriedly, taking off Skood's cap and coat.

Immediately Shike's attitude toward the gambler changed. Pulling a gun from his pocket, he told the card man to sit at the table, and if Pat Garrett showed up to tell him to come in.

"Tell him you're waitin' for me," said Shike. "I'll do the rest."

Silky nodded pleasantly. "You don't have to get tough. I'm in this deal as deep as you are." He sat down and began to shuffle the cards.

"Listen, you," Shike growled, "if you double-cross me, I'll turn this dump into a morgue. And you'll be the first customer."

"Have it your own way," said Silky, smiling. "Only I think you're making a mistake."

"And you, you little rat!" snarled Shike, glaring at Skood, "take that chair and sit in it. No, put it there!" He indicated the door to the adjoining room. "You're waitin' for me to show up," he told Skood. "Speak your piece right or I'll blow a hole through you."

The trap was set. Shike had backed into the adjoining room, leaving the door open a few inches. A foot from the door, his back toward it, sat Skood. Beyond him, his back also toward the door, sat the card man, both in line with the outer door.

Hunched down in his overcoat, Skood stared at Silky's back. Would Pat Garrett come? And what chance would he have? The minute he opened the door Shike would get him.

The footsteps were evenly spaced, deliberate, ominous in the stillness. Following a heavy knock on the door, Skood grasped the sides of his chair.

"Who's there?" called Silky.

"Garrett."

"Come on in."

The latch clicked. Skood held his breath. Someone kicked the door open. It hit the wall with a bang. A tall figure charged in, was across the room holding a gun on Silky before Skood could recover his breath. Garrett glanced sharply round.

"Anybody in that room?" he said, nodding toward the door in front of which Skood sat.

"There wasn't when I came in," said Silky.

"Who sent for me?"

Skood licked dry lips. "It was me. A fella called Shike—"

"Who the hell is Shike?" said Garrett.

"I don't know. That guy at the table told me Shike was coming over here this evening—" Skood hesitated. He felt a draught on the back of his neck. Unable to get a clear shot at Garrett, who was in the middle of the room, Shike was cautiously opening the door. Skood wanted to call out, warn Garrett. But to do so would warn Shike. And there was the card man. Tilting his chair, Skood began to rock gently back and forth. He felt as if he were teetering on the edge of oblivion. He clamped his teeth and let himself go over backward. As he crashed against the door he saw Silky drop to the floor, saw a gun flash in Garrett's hand. Shike's gun boomed. Something limp and heavy fell on Skood, knocking the wind out of him.

Then he was again sitting in the chair and Silky was offering him whiskey.

"You sure can ride 'em!" Silky was saying. "Brace up! You're all right."

Pat Garrett was standing near the lamp, shoving shells into his gun. There was a tang of smoke in the air. On the floor in the open doorway lay Shike, his gun still clutched in his hand.

These Western guys were a cold-blooded bunch! After brushing off his clothes and adjusting his necktie, Silky sat talking with Pat Garrett as if they were old friends. Both men completely ignored the body in the doorway. The card man had helped set the trap for Garrett. Skood couldn't understand it. Nor did he try to reason it out until Garrett said, "How much rent did you pay for this dump?"

"That's all right," Silky replied. "I'll charge it up in my expense account."

Skood pricked up his ears. The gambler an undercover man. He had framed it so that Garrett could get Shike. But it seemed a mighty queer way to go about it, taking all those chances. Suddenly it occurred to Skood that possibly they may have had a strong reason in planning to catch Shike on the Mexican side of the border.

Silky gestured toward the body in the doorway. "I'll take care of that. You're lucky, Pat. You took a hell of a long chance."

"Not any," said Garrett. "See you at Golden's."

Silky nodded. Garrett turned to Skood. "Do you think you can make it to El Paso?"

"Guess I got to."

"Then we'll walk."

BEFORE Skood realized it they had crossed the line, were back in El Paso. Garrett stopped and lighted a cigar. As if answering a signal, Bill Donahue stepped from the shadow of the customs office.

"Well, Pat," he said, a tremor in his voice.

Garrett flicked the match away, nodded. "Silky will be over in about an hour. He's busy, right now, winding up his watch."

"It's a railroad watch," he added significantly.

Donahue fell into step with them as they walked on up the deserted street. Skood shuffled along, wondering why they were so silent. There was plenty to talk about. Presently Garrett said in his peculiarly abrupt way, "Bill, you've seen Charley Price's pony run."

"Sure!"

"Well, the Dallas boys have got a little bay pony that can run the legs off Peanut. They'll be up here, one of these days. Thought I'd give you a tip—"

Skood was disgusted. They had forgotten him. He wasn't even the tail to the lost dog now. But when it came to horses—

"That Dallas pony's got to be good to beat Peanut," declared Skood.

They didn't seem to hear him. They had stopped in front of Golden's. Garrett started up the stairway, paused. "If you got time, steer the kid over to the hospital. Silky says he's got a couple of busted ribs." Garrett waved his hand. "So-long, Johnny. Keep your nose clean."

Now wasn't that a hell of a way to turn a guy loose! Skood shrugged, as he accompanied Donahue up the street. "He's kind of peculiar, ain't he?"

"A whole lot of crooks think so," said Bill Donahue.

"You would think he didn't give a damn whether he got bumped off or not," said Skood. "God, it was awful—that guy Shike planted behind the door all fixed to dynamite Pat Garrett, and me thinking all the time that Silky was in with Shike, just waiting a chance to plug Garrett himself. Say, if Garrett and Silky were working together—"

"You're out of step."

"I get you. Being a cop, you ain't giving it away that Silky is an undercover man. But I ain't gone blind yet." Clamping his teeth against the pain in his chest, Skood shuffled along beside Donahue. When Skood talked he could forget the pain. But Donahue didn't seem to want to talk.

They were approaching the hospital when Skood let out a wordless exclamation. He had it now. Silky, an undercover man, and Pat Garrett were old friends, as, apparently, were Garrett and Bill Donahue. Back in the desert, Garrett had said the brakeman's name was Joe Donahue. Skood glanced at the solid, silent figure walking beside him. "I been trying to figure this deal out, seeing as I was mixed up in it. What I mean, the brakeman those guys bumped off was a mighty white guy. I was wondering—"

"He was my brother," said Bill Donahue. "He lived in Las Cruces. Pat used to call him his best friend."

"Thanks, mister. Now I got it straight."

Sick, dizzy, hunched down in his overcoat, Skood was sitting in the anteroom of the hospital. He longed to stretch out and sleep. He had done his stuff. These guys were through with him. Well, what the hell! He was nothing but Overcoat Johnny, the bum. Skood felt himself going, clutched at Donahue's arm. The plain-clothes man seemed to be fading away. And now Skood was riding Searchlight, coming around strong on the outside in a thunder of hoofs. . . .

He woke in a clean white bed. There was sunshine in the white walled room. A nurse was leaning over him. "How are you feeling now?"

"Did we win?"

"Of course. But you must keep quiet. You've been running a temperature." The nurse nodded and left the room. Skood dozed. He wakened to find the nurse standing beside the bed.

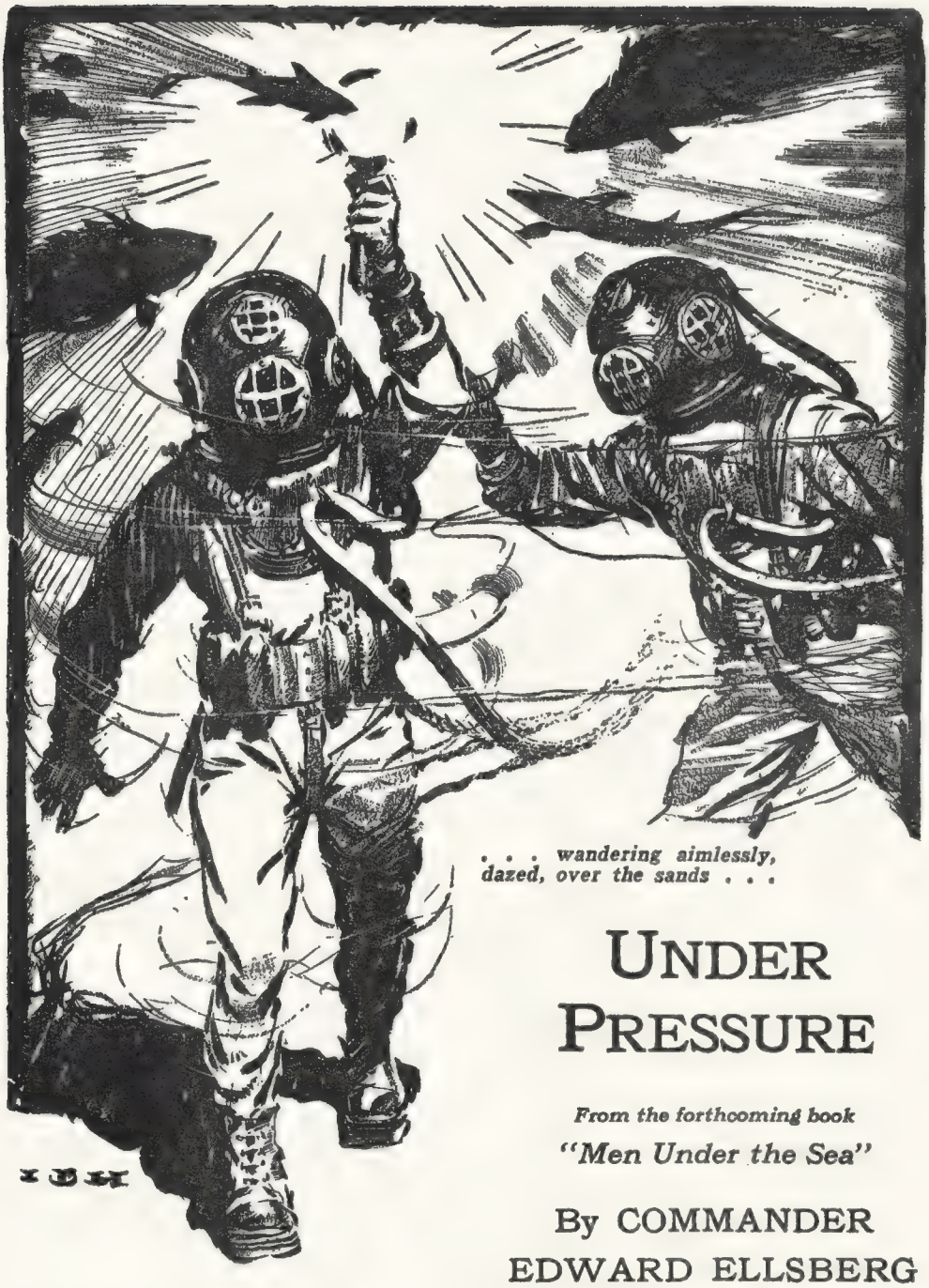
"Mr. Garrett," she said, "called early this morning. He asked me to give this to you."

Skood took the long envelope, fumbled it open. In it were two one hundred dollar bills. Skood's eyes were burning. He bit his lip. These Western guys—cold-blooded?

"They don't say it," reflected Skood. "They do it. Act like they were bashful. Me, I talk too dam' much."

"Shall I take care of it for you?" said the nurse.

Skood had hit the ties so long, and had been bumped so often that he had become overly cautious, especially about money. Of course the nurse was all right. And so was the two hundred bucks. But somehow—"Lady, I like your looks, but this mazuma goes under my pillow. And seeing I've got it—can a guy buy a cup of coffee in this dump?"



. . . wandering aimlessly, dazed, over the sands . . .

UNDER PRESSURE

From the forthcoming book

"Men Under the Sea"

By COMMANDER EDWARD ELLSBERG

DIVING is queer business. Dangerous? Yes. But not for the weird reasons that lurid fiction writers, who usually know no more of diving than they do of conditions on Mars, have fed their readers. Why didn't the divers on the *S-4* save the men in her torpedo room; why did they make only a few dives before the storm drove them off; why didn't they keep on diving, storm or no storm; why, when they did dive, did each man accomplish so lit-

tle? From the thousands and thousands of protests that poured in on Washington and the flood of press criticisms that descended on the rescue fleet at Provincetown, it was evident that the people in this country as a whole knew as little about diving as did Victor Hugo and Jules Verne.

What makes diving difficult and dangerous? To the diver the world over, whether Greek, Kanaka, Japanese, Italian, or American, who is diving to accomplish a specific commercial result and not merely to provide faked movie thrills or melodramatic books, it's neither the devil-fish nor the shark who must be battled hand to hand in desperate combat on the sea floor. It isn't the villainous conspirator bent on severing a diver's airhose and robbing him of the treasure he has salvaged from the deep, those chests of gold and bushels of pearls and rubies, which the public has been led to believe always pave the bottom of the sea.

It is none of these fantastic imaginings. What the difficulty actually is, what the danger always has been from the days, thousands of years ago, when the first savage plunged beneath the surface to bring up sponge or pearl from the depths, is the very prosaic fact that water has weight—plenty of it.

As nature made both us and this world in which we exist, we live and have our being at the bottom of an ocean of air—a very deep ocean, extending scores and scores of miles above us, but with the air rapidly thinning away toward a vacuum only a few miles up. The cumulative weight of this gaseous ocean presses down on us, enters our lungs, permeates our bodies, and nature has through countless eons evolved our organisms to stand this pressure which, registered on the ordinary barometer, averages about 14.7 pounds to the square inch, which we call a pressure of one atmosphere.

Our brains, our nerves, our lungs, our entire bodies are accustomed to function under this atmospheric pressure; if it be varied much, either up or down, distress follows promptly. It is a widely observed fact that people with weak hearts find it dangerous to cross high mountains, to live in high altitudes, or to travel very high in airplanes. The reason, of course, is that as such individuals go up the air pressure decreases, the air thins out, and they commence to pant violently trying to get enough of the rarer air into their lungs to give their bodies the oxygen they need, and their weak hearts sometimes give way under the added strain.

Yet even under these circumstances, the change of pressure and variation in the amount of air inspired per breath are relatively insignificant as compared to the changes which a deep sea diver has to bear. For instance, atop Pike's Peak, some 14,100 feet above sea level, which is as high as most people are ever likely to get, the pressure drops about four tenths of an atmosphere, or from 14.7 pounds per square inch (which is the sea level average) to around 8.7 pounds, decreasing some 6 pounds. This decrease of about 40% from normal in pressure causes many people acute distress and makes even the average person pant violently in climbing the few steps to the observatory tower, so closely has nature tuned us to what she considers normal and so little are we able to bear deviations from that normal.

CONSIDER now the diver. Sea water is heavy; a cubic foot of it weighs 64 pounds. For every foot below the surface the diver goes he has added to the weight of the sea pressing on each square foot of his body a further load of 64 pounds; or on every square inch of his body, .445 pounds. He need descend but 14 feet below the surface of the sea to raise the pressure on his body by the same amount, 6 pounds, that an ascent of 14,100 feet to the top of Pike's Peak decreases it. And he need go but 33 feet below the surface of the sea to double the pressure on him, to make it twice what nature intended him to bear.

Now 33 feet is no great depth for a diver, who must take wrecks where he finds them; working depths beyond 100 feet are not uncommon. What does that mean to the diver?

On the *S-51,* we worked for months

at 132 feet, twenty-two fathoms down. At that depth, the water pressure on the sea-floor was four and one quarter tons to the square foot, or 59 pounds to the square inch, and the diver had a total load bearing on every square inch of him of five atmospheres, just five times what nature had designed him to stand! And over the entire surface of his body, lay a pressure of nearly sixty tons, a load easily capable of reducing him to jelly—and which to some unfortunate divers has done just that.

Owing then to the extreme weight of water, it is obvious that a deep sea diver faces extraordinary conditions and dangers under which he must live and work, and compared to these perilous conditions, the tinsel devil fish and sharks with which the literature of diving is festooned fade into insignificance.

What results? To live and work under water for more than a few scant minutes, it is of course obvious that a diver must be supplied continuously with air. To prevent his chest from being crushed in by the terrific load on it in deep water, this air must be supplied him at a pressure slightly greater than that of the water surrounding it. And to permit him to breathe at all, there must be some device over his head to keep the water away from his nostrils while he breathes.

Centuries of slow development evolved at last in the hands of Siebe, Gorman and Company of London, in the present combination of a rigid copper helmet bolted tightly to a watertight canvas and rubber suit, properly weighted, as best fulfilling the mechanical necessities of a diving rig. Air is fed into the helmet in a steady stream, and after breathing, escapes to the sea through a spring-loaded exhaust valve. The air, breathed into the lungs at a pressure slightly above that of the sea bottom, communicates its pressure through the blood to every part of the diver's body, putting him under an internal pressure counterbalancing that of the sea pressing on him externally. In this condition of equilibrium, the diver can stand any depth of sea without being crushed.

Normally, then, the diver is in balance between two opposing forces of great magnitude, and his state may fairly well be illustrated by comparison with that of a pneumatic tire on a heavily loaded truck. So long as the tire is properly inflated with sufficient compressed air, it stays rounded out and supports the load pressing down upon it. But if the tire "blows out," down comes the weight of the truck upon it and flattens it to a pancake. In the same way, if the diver should by any chance lose the air pressure in his suit, down comes the weight of the sea upon him and instantly crushes him as flat as any blown-out tire.

To live then beneath the sea, the diver in the usual flexible dress and helmet must breathe compressed air, under pressures of three, four, five, or even more atmospheres, pressures far above that existing on the surface to which nature has accustomed us, and the results of breathing under such unnatural conditions lead directly to the gravest danger that a diver faces, "the bends."

NOT MANY decades ago, when diving was relatively in its infancy, though the diving rig used had been fairly well developed to its present state, divers began to notice that if they went much below depths of sixty feet or stayed down very long at that depth, say much over an hour, when they came back to the surface they were shortly attacked by a mysterious malady, causing intense pain and doubling the victim up in strange contortions, from which convulsive movements of the sufferers the malady received the slang term of "the bends." But for those unfortunates who had gone much below sixty feet or had worked there several hours, "the bends" often took more serious form—paralysis set in, making the victim a helpless cripple for life; in some cases, quick death ensued, coming within a short time after emerging from the water.

The divers could never figure out what caused these afflictions. It was simply obvious that strange and quick doom lurked in the ocean depths for such as dared penetrate them. What is unaccountable is naturally doubly terrifying, and to the men involved it seemed that

malignant demons lurked on the ocean floor, intent on punishing the plunderers who sought to rob the wrecks the sea had once claimed for its own.

But the lure of sunken gold is strong. Some men escaped attack, and in spite of sudden death and of even more horrible complete paralysis, deep diving continued spasmodically, with the victims of "the bends" fatalistically accepting their curse.

Had it been left to divers only to solve the mystery, it is probable that the matter would still be in the realm of superstition, but the advancing needs of engineering brought the problem forcibly to the attention of scientists. The construction of tunnels under rivers and the necessity of providing deep foundations along river banks for huge bridges brought in as an indispensable tool the caisson for the workers, which, maintained under moderate air pressure, kept back the water while the laborers, euphemistically called "sand-hogs," burrowed through the water-soaked muck and clay to advance their bore or sink their footings. Here again were soon noted the same symptoms of the dreaded diver's malady; but now, with hundreds of men involved, the fatalities jumped, the number of cases of "the bends" multiplied, and the work suffered.

But "the bends" did not confine itself to the sand-hogs, and struck at a more notable victim. The Brooklyn Bridge, with by far the longest span of its time, required extraordinary caisson work for its pier foundations in the soft mud beneath the level of the East River; its builder, Washington Augustus Roebling, spent so much time personally supervising the caisson work on the success of which his mighty bridge structure depended that he shortly was struck down himself by the compressed air illness and for ten years, from 1873 to the completion of the bridge in 1883, was compelled to direct the construction from his sick-bed.

"The bends" began to receive scientific attention for the first time. Under the more dignified title of "caisson disease," science turned an inquiring eye on the problem, and very quickly dissipated the mists of superstition. In 1860 a Frenchman, Professor Leroy de Mericourt, expounded the theory that the diver's blood becomes surcharged with the air which he breathes under heavy pressure; but it was left to his compatriot, Monsieur Paul Bert in 1878, after Roebling's disaster, to investigate the disease seriously, to expound the causes of "the bends," and to indicate the first crude method of avoidance.

BERT demonstrated that the disease was due wholly to bubbles of a gas, nitrogen, which appeared in the blood and tissues of a diver on emerging from the surface. Professor de Mericourt had demonstrated how the gas came on the scene. Briefly the situation is explainable about as follows:

The air we breathe is composed roughly of 21 per cent of oxygen, the essential gas for sustaining life, and 78 per cent of nitrogen, a wholly inert gas which simply dilutes the oxygen, with the remaining 1 per cent a mixture of carbon dioxide and certain other rare gases which may here be neglected. As we breathe under ordinary conditions, this mixture of gases is inhaled into the lungs, where it comes into contact with the blood, with the result that part of the oxygen is converted into carbon dioxide and the remainder, together with the nitrogen, the newly formed carbon dioxide, and some additional moisture, is expelled on exhalation.

But the diver's conditions of breathing are far from ordinary. If, as on the *S-51*, he is breathing air under a pressure of five atmospheres, a strange thing happens. So great is the pressure now in his lungs that the nitrogen, instead of passing harmlessly out on the next breath is forced to dissolve in the blood and with each repeated breath, more nitrogen is dissolved by the blood stream it meets in the lungs, to be carried thence to every part of the body, where, under the same super-pressure, it is taken up by the tissues, the fats, and the muscles.

The speed with which this absorption of nitrogen goes on is proportional to the pressure under which the diver is working, and its extent depends on the

length of time he remains under that pressure. Consequently, deeper water means faster absorption and a longer stay means more gas dissolved, the total amount absorbed being a combination of both factors—depth and time.

Now while the diver is on the bottom, he never feels this process going on, and is usually quite ignorant of it. But when he starts to ascend, trouble starts, and in the old days, culminated in "the bends." As the diver rises, the sea pressure decreases; when he reaches the surface, it vanishes altogether. But it was this excess pressure which originally forced nitrogen to dissolve in his body, and only under that pressure will the nitrogen stay dissolved there. When the pressure decreases, the nitrogen, no longer able to stay in solution, starts to appear in the blood and elsewhere in the form of bubbles; as the pressure decreases further, more nitrogen comes out of solution and meanwhile the original bubbles expand. The diver's blood stream, instead of being a liquid, commences to become a froth.

This condition can be best illustrated by a familiar example—an example first suggested by de Mericourt. Consider a bottle of some charged water, such as ginger ale, with the original cap intact and the bottle sealed. Held up to the light, the liquid in the bottle appears as a clear, solid fluid. That liquid contains, however, a considerable amount of carbon dioxide dissolved in it under several atmospheres pressure, but which, being in solution, is invisible. Pull the cap and watch what happens.

Immediately the cap is removed and the bottle is opened, the pressure on the ginger ale is removed and drops to atmospheric. And with the removal of that excess pressure, the gas immediately begins to come out of solution, the liquid is permeated with visible bubbles, and the ginger ale foams up and overflows the neck of the bottle in a violent froth of escaping bubbles. Even for a considerable period after the cap is pulled, gas will continue to be liberated from solution, rising in a steady stream of bubbles toward the surface.

What happens to the uncapped bottle of ginger ale happens to the unfortunate diver who rises to the surface after a long, deep dive. But in the case of the diver, the results are far more serious. If enough nitrogen has been absorbed in his system, bubbles large enough to clog his veins and block off circulation form here or there, causing the intense pain and convulsions of "the bends." In some cases, enough bubbles are carried to the heart to fill one side of it with accumulations of gas which stop its pumping action, causing quick death.

In other cases—and relatively frequent ones in the old days—the bubbles lodged in the spinal column, causing paralysis, usually of the legs. The favorite lodging spot of bubbles in minor cases is in the joints, such as the knees, the elbows, and the fingers, causing marked pain but no fatalities.

The discovery of the cause of caisson disease indicated the remedy for it. Monsieur Bert deduced from his experiments and discoveries that if instead of coming immediately to the surface after a dive, the diver were to rise slowly but steadily to the surface, the nitrogen dissolved in his body would slowly come out of solution as the pressure decreased, in quantities not sufficient at any time to cause sizable bubbles, and escape continuously through the lungs—a process which was called "decompression."

Until 1907, Bert's method of slow uniform decompression was generally used by divers and caisson workers, very considerably reducing the number of cases of "the bends" but unfortunately not eliminating them completely. On tunnel work in New York around the turn of this century there were still numerous cases where sand-hogs, hours after they had received their usual decompression and left the job, collapsed on the streets, where ordinarily they were considered by passersby and even police as simply sodden drunks and left in the gutters or carted unconscious to a police station to sleep off a supposed jag, which naturally they never did.

After some sad experiences with cases of "the bends" thus handled, caisson workers were by law required always to wear a metal tag, warning observers that in case of collapse anywhere, the wearer was to be rushed immediately to

a specified hospital equipped to treat "the bends."

OBVIOUSLY, Bert's decompression methods left much to be desired. In 1906, the British Admiralty undertook a further study of the subject, mainly carried out by Professor J. S. Haldane, a physiologist, together with the then Lieutenant G. C. C. Damant, R. N.

Haldane discovered that Bert's uniform slow decompression did not positively ensure desaturation of the blood and tissues. Paradoxically, Haldane's experiments showed it was much safer to decompress in stages—that is, to come up sharply part way, so as to cut the pressure on the diver in half, under which sudden decrease, a considerable amount of nitrogen would emerge and escape but under a residual pressure still large enough to prevent the formation of any bubbles of troublesome size.

After a specified time at the first stage, the diver was to be raised sharply to the next stage, again halving the pressure on him, and here letting him stop a further period in the water for more nitrogen elimination. And so on to the surface, the idea being that each sharp decrease in pressure would bring about definite elimination, but that no one drop in pressure should be great enough to allow large bubbles to form.

Haldane's theories were correct. He worked out permissible lengths of dives to various depths, and the decompression tables showing the stopping points and times of stop at each point for safe decompression. Since Haldane's day, careful observation of his decompression tables, slightly modified by later experimental work, has usually avoided attacks of "the bends."

But the major drawback resulting from his work was his conclusion that for safe decompression, the time a diver could spend on the bottom was decidedly limited. For instance, at twenty-two fathoms he recommended a dive not exceeding thirty minutes, to be followed by a decompression time of thirty-three minutes in ascending.

At this depth on the *S-51,* owing to scarcity of divers and other reasons, we usually lengthened the time of a dive to one hour, which required a decompression time of about ninety minutes, but we were not completely free of minor cases of "the bends" and had one decidedly desperate case.

THE ONE weak point in Haldane's stage decompression is that it must of necessity fit the normal man decompressing under average physiological conditions. Unfortunately, some divers, regardless of how carefully selected, vary from the normal, and even a normal individual has his days when his bodily reactions are far from normal. Heaven only knows what may happen then. For instance, take the case just referred to above.

We were salvaging the *S-51,* twenty-two fathoms down, on the sea floor some fourteen miles to the eastward of Block Island. It was mid-November, and the water was very cold. Of ten divers with whom we had started, about six were knocked out by general exhaustion and a succession of minor cases of "the bends." If work was to continue, some fresh divers would have to be employed.

Among the seamen acting as tenders was a petty officer, L'Heureux. He had done considerable diving in shallow water in previous years and had made at least one dive to a depth of about 190 feet. L'Heureux volunteered to dive on the *S-51,* and we were glad to use him.

Not to make things too difficult for his initial dive, it was decided to send him down first simply as a helper to another diver, Joe Eiben, who was thoroughly acquainted with the wreck, L'Heureux's task being only to hold a submarine lamp to light up the black interior of the *S-51's* engine room, while his mate did the actual work of closing some valves.

Joe Eiben was dressed first, hoisted over the side, disappeared down the descending line. L'Heureux's helmet was screwed on; he was lifted overboard, dropped into the sea, given the lamp, a powerful 1000 watt submarine searchlight, and in his turn slid down the descending line, which was tied to the submarine's gun, just forward of the con-

ning tower. In a little over a minute after leaving the surface, L'Heureux's telephone tender announced,

"L'Heureux reports, 'On the bottom!'" So far, so good. L'Heureux's tender started to pay out his lifelines, to give him slack enough to go aft astern of the conning tower and follow Eiben down into the *S-51's* machinery hatch.

A few minutes later, a third diver, Tom Eadie, was dressed and dropped overboard to work on an independent job on the deck of the submarine forward.

Ten minutes went by. Below, in our hull, compressors were throbbing, shaking the *Falcon* with their pulsations as they hammered the air down through the sea to our three divers. At the rail, three tenders periodically "fished" the divers' airhoses to keep out a proper amount of slack. In the *Falcon's* superstructure perched three other tenders, headsets strapped over their ears, transmitters in their hands, listening intently for any message from the men below.

Around us rolled the open sea, a moderate chop beating against the sides of the *Falcon,* while from her, radiating in all directions like the spokes of a huge wheel from the hub, ran out six heavy manila hawsers, shackled to buoys in a wide range surrounding us to hold us steady over the wreck regardless of how wind and sea might shift.

The calm on the *Falcon's* deck was broken by a call from her superstructure.

"Joe Eiben's just phoned! He wants to know when L'Heureux's coming down with that light! He says it's pitch black inside the engine room, and until he gets a light, he can't do a damned thing!"

Puzzled, I looked up at the telephone tenders. L'Heureux, of course, was on the bottom and had already had far more than enough time to get aft to his job. It didn't look right at all. Signaling the tender on L'Heureux's phone, I ordered briefly,

"Tell L'Heureux to quit wasting time and get aft with Joe!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" The tender bent over his transmitter, sang out the message to L'Heureux below, then repeated it, but in another moment reported,

"Sorry sir, but L'Heureux don't answer!"

"GIVE me that telephone!" I reached up, caught the headset and transmitter dropped to me from the boatskids above, sang out,

"Hello, L'Heureux!"

No answer, unless what sounded like a somewhat explosive "Ha!" could be taken as one. Again and again I tried, but to each call, each question about where he was, why he didn't get aft, I got nothing more than that occasional "Ha!" exploding in my ears. I was getting nowhere. Time was flying; the precious minutes in which Eiben should be working, were being wasted while he waited in the black engine room for his light.

In disgust I sang out to the tender on Eiben's telephone set,

"Tell Joe to come up out of the engine room, go forward to the gun, get L'Heureux, and lead him back!" Then, remembring that I had still a third man on the bottom, Tom Eadie, who had gone down after L'Heureux, I seized Eadie's telephone, asked him,

"Say, Tom, did you see anything of L'Heureux when you went down?"

Promptly came a reply from Eadie,

"Yeah! When I hit the sub, there was L'Heureux standing by the gun, not moving, an' holding up that light in the water like he was the Statue o' Liberty!" Eadie paused a moment to catch up on his breathing, then continued: "Knowing it was L'Heureux's first dip, I clapped him on the back, laid my own helmet against L'Heureux's, an' asked him was he all right, an' I thought L'Heureux answered 'Yes' so I left him an' went forward on my own job."

So the pressure had apparently frozen L'Heureux into immobility or he had completely lost his sense of direction in the dim depths, and was afraid to move. Still, there was the possibility that he had started, but had wandered forward instead of aft. I sang out into Eadie's phone again,

"Tom, go aft from where you're working until you find L'Heureux!"

Anxiously I waited, cursing inwardly.

I now had Eiben coming forward, Eadie going aft, along the submarine, both wasting their dives. But I instantly forgot all that when Eadie reported,

"On deck! He's not by the gun! I just bumped into Joe here and he says L'Heureux isn't anywhere aft either!"

Startled, I pondered that incredulously. Both my divers had met amidships, one from forward, one from aft, and no L'Heureux between them? They must have missed him, but both were good men and that was highly unlikely. What then had happened to L'Heureux? With a sinking feeling in the stomach, I tried once more to raise L'Heureux on his own telephone. No answer.

And then from the depths came another message, excitedly ringing in my ears from Eadie's phone,

"On deck! I think I see a light out on the bottom, about a hundred feet off the sub's starboard beam, and it's going farther away all the time!"

"That must be L'Heureux, Tom! He must have fallen off the sub and he's lost! Slide down the side and chase him!"

Eiben lowered Eadie down the submarine's side, hand over hand paying out his lines till Eadie struck bottom; then Eadie started out across the firm sands of the ocean floor, following that will-o-the-wisp of a glimmer vaguely seen through the translucent depths. Finally he caught up with it. There was L'Heureux, wandering aimlessly over the sands, the light clasped in his hand, while curious fish swam all about him, darting suddenly in and out of the searchlight's gleam.

EADIE took his shipmate by the hand, guided him back to the submarine, where Eiben hauled both of them back up on deck. Practically all of their allotted hour on the bottom was gone; we signaled all three men to stand by to rise. But nevertheless, on the topside I heaved a deep sigh of relief, thankful that nothing worse than two completely wasted dives had resulted.

We started the three men up for decompression. Diving was over for the day; we had no more divers to send down. As the late afternoon waned, we heaved the divers up through the cold sea, carefully decompressing them, giving even a little extra time at each stop for L'Heureux's benefit. Finally, as darkness fell, with over two hours having elapsed since their rise started, we hoisted the three dripping divers in over the *Falcon's* side, dropped them on deck, and the tenders rushed in to strip off their burdensome rigs.

I loitered near L'Heureux, curious to note whether he looked frightened after his queer mishap. Off came L'Heureux's helmet. I asked him how he felt.

"Fine, Mr. Ellsberg! Fine!"

No question about it; he wasn't bluffing. L'Heureux was positively bubbling over with mirth, as happy as if he had just come from a very lively party. Unquestionably he had on what we called an "oxygen jag," a state of mild intoxication induced occasionally in some divers by the exhilaration of the excessive oxygen breathed in heavily compressed air. It meant nothing and would soon pass off, but it did explain his queer silence and his otherwise inexcusable actions. The moment he had let go of the gun he had apparently staggered drunkenly overboard and as drunkenly had zigzagged away across the ocean.

Surgeon Flotte, our medical officer, and an outstanding authority on the physiology of diving, came up, observed L'Heureux a moment, then confirmed my surmise.

"Oxygen-intoxication," he muttered.

There was no gain in questioning L'Heureux. The cause of his mishap was evident. And there was even less profit in laying him out for having ruined our day's work, expensive as that loss was—it simply wasn't his fault, if excessive oxygen had jazzed him up. Not to make him feel any worse by questioning him further, I left.

The tenders finished undressing them, leaving the *Falcon's* fantail a mess of wet lead shoes, lead belts, helmets, hoses, and sodden diving rigs, while the three divers still in their underwear, hurried below for supper, already somewhat late.

Five minutes later, seated on a bench before the heavily laden mess table, L'Heureux, still as merry as ever, sud-

denly collapsed, pitched forward on the table, unconscious!

NO NEED to ask questions in that company. "The bends" and a bad case of it! No one wasted time in futile first aid measure. Hastily his shipmates seized the silent figure of L'Heureux, unceremoniously rushed him up the steep ladder to the deck above, while a cry rang out forward,

"Dr. Flotte! Dr. Flotte!"

In through the round steel door of the recompression tank went L'Heureux's inert form, one diver dragging his head, another pushing on his legs. Running from the wardroom came Surgeon Flotte, to dive through the opening almost on L'Heureux's heels. The door clanged shut behind him. On went the compressed air, hissing gently into the chamber.

Hastily Surgeon Flotte felt L'Heureux. No sign of heart beat. The man was completely out, might die at any moment, might perhaps already be dead from bubbles of air clogging his heart. It was no time for routine measures. At any cost those bubbles must be reduced to a size small enough to pass through the heart valves, to allow circulation to continue. And only high air pressure could compress them enough for that.

Dr. Flotte sprang for the air valve, twisted it wide open. Immediately the low hiss of the incoming air changed to a loud roar, and under the terrific pressure of the high pressure air banks, air started to pour into that recompression chamber. The needle on the caisson gauge jumped like a racehorse getting away from the barrier, continued rapidly round the dial.

Twenty pounds — forty — fifty. Dr. Flotte's ears began to ring. That was as high in pressure as we had ever gone before on anybody. But no stop now. Sixty pounds. Blood oozed from Flotte's nose and mouth, but still he kept the air roaring in full blast. He must get the pressure up on L'Heureux, never mind himself. Seventy pounds, with the valve wide open, the needle still racing up the dial. Eighty pounds, a higher pressure by far than anybody on that diving job had ever before been subjected to, either on the bottom or in the tank, and worst of all for Flotte, taken in one swift rush!

Eighty pounds should do it. Flotte shut off the air. Dizzy from the sudden impact of high pressure, ears ringing excruciatingly, he bent over L'Heureux, tore off his shirt. The diver's chest was covered with purple splotches, the result of the bursting of a myriad of small blood vessels from expanding air. But that was a minor result of "the bends." The major question was circulation. Had he got those heart bubbles down before L'Heureux's heart had stopped forever?

Flotte bent over his chest, listened, then smiled wanly. His heroic treatment had succeeded. A faint heart beat became perceptible; L'Heureux began to breathe again. The bubbles, compressed to one-sixth their previous size by the sudden application of pressure, were passing out of the heart, and blood was beginning to pump through it once more.

Gradually then Flotte began to release the air from the chamber, decompressing L'Heureux by regular stages. But in spite of working over him all night through, in spite of everything that his medical skill could suggest, Flotte was never able to bring L'Heureux back to consciousness. Through the long hours he lay there as the air pressure went down—limp, unconscious, apparently paralyzed in some degree, simply breathing feebly.

At 3 A.M., Dr. Flotte emerged from the recompression chamber, weak and dazed from his own exertions and the shock of high pressure. He sought out Lieutenant Hartley, skipper of the *Falcon.*

"Everything that pressure can do for L'Heureux's been done. Everything that I can do for him here has been done. He's paralyzed and he's nearly gone. If we're going to save L'Heureux's life, we've got to get him to a hospital right away!"

THE *Falcon* was twenty-five miles at sea from Newport and the nearest hospital, swinging to her six hawsers mooring us over the grave of the *S-51.* Getting out in a small boat to unshackle those six hawsers from the mooring

buoys often took an hour. Hartley called me.

"We're getting underway for Newport at once with L'Heureux. No time to unmoor now. I'm going to cut the hawsers. O. K.?"

I nodded.

In a moment axes were flashing downward into the eight-inch manila hawsers that held us to our buoys, and the frayed ends of the hacked off cables went flying overboard; the severed mooring lines drifting off in the waves like undulating sea-serpents. Below, our forced draft fans commenced to shriek, pouring air into the furnaces as the oil burners, suddenly opened wide, began to spray huge quantities of fuel into the fires.

Quivering from keel to superstructure from racing engine and twirling propeller, we got underway in the darkness, headed under full power for Newport, radioing to the Naval Hospital there to have an ambulance waiting on dock when we arrived.

At 7 A.M. in the early dawn, we transferred the still unconscious L'Heureux to the ambulance, and sadly headed back to sea to pick up our severed hawsers.

That was mid-November. When we landed him, L'Heureux had weighed over a hundred and sixty pounds. Within a few weeks, partial paralysis, including a kidney, had wasted him away to a skeleton of seventy pounds, and there for months he hovered precariously between life and death. Not until late the following July, after an eight months' struggle in the hospital, did he finally recover sufficiently to be discharged.

What happened to L'Heureux? Why didn't the decompression we gave him when he rose from that unlucky dive, free him of nitrogen in the normal manner, save him from a disastrous case of "the bends?"

We never knew; Dr. Flotte could never explain it. The man had once made a deeper dive than that and came up unaffected. What was different on this occasion? We could only theorize. Something, a sort of mental shell shock, so to speak, at finding himself on that smashed submarine, still the coffin of most of her crew, may have so upset his normal nervous and physical reactions that his blood circulation may have been much reduced during his rise, with the result that he failed to decompress properly and came up with abnormal quantities of nitrogen still in his blood, which, once he was no longer under pressure, came out of solution and knocked him cold.

That, at any rate, is all we know. Haldane's decompression tables are correct, and we as divers follow them to avoid the dreaded scourge of diving. But once in a while in the abnormal case they fail to work and "the bends" are with us again, as frightening as ever.

BUT abnormalities in diving are occasionally on the good side, leaving scientific theory just as unable to explain clearly why. Some few divers have worked under conditions which should each day have killed them with "the bends," and been no more affected than if they had never left the surface.

The most famous case was that of Alexander Lambert, a British diver, trained in the days when "the bends" were simply a mysterious visitation and to whom, during most of his diving life, the term "decompression" would have been simply an unmeaning phrase. On his most noted exploit, the salvage of $350,000 worth of gold coin from the Spanish vessel *Alfonso XII*, sunk in 1885 off the Grand Canary, he had to work inside the vessel at a depth of 162 feet, twenty-seven fathoms down. This was the maximum depth up to that time at which any diver had been called on to dive.

Lambert, the greatest diver of his day, and perhaps of any day, was a physical marvel. As described by one who knew him well and who often saw him stripped, he was a "medium-sized Hercules," a man only 5 feet 8 inches high, but with a chest measurement of 52 inches and with arms, legs, and a neck to correspond, giving him enormous physical strength.

In the course of his salvage work on the *Alfonso XII*, Lambert, single handed, blasted his way down through three iron decks to the treasure room, located

We dragged the limp form on to the steel platform

just above the shaft tunnel, and then sent up the gold in boxes weighing some two hundred pounds each.

Lambert made thirty-three dives on the job, usually from two to three dives a day. He averaged about twenty to twenty-five minutes on the bottom on each dive, coming up each time his work was done in from four to five minutes, just as fast as his tenders could heave

his massive form up through the twenty-seven fathoms of sea covering the wreck.

According to the usual decompression tables, he should have spent about sixty minutes on his rise instead of only four or five. And he should never have attempted a second, let alone a third dive, on the same day.

Why didn't "the bends" strike Lambert down after his first dive, as it would have any ordinary diver? And if it didn't get him the first time, how did he ever escape on his second and third dives of the same day, when the average man, even properly decompressed on each rise, would certainly have been stricken?

There is no certain explanation. In diving, "blood is thicker than water" is more than a trite expression; only upon the fact that blood *is* thicker than water rests our stage decompression theory. Since blood, unlike the charged water used in the ginger ale experiment before cited, is a thick, viscous fluid, bubbles do not form in it until the pressure has been more than cut in half, thus allowing the diver to be quickly hoisted from whatever depth he is working at to a point where the pressure is about half that, where he is held while some nitrogen escapes from solution without dangerous bubbles forming.

Now Alec Lambert was an extraordinary human being, possibly a decidedly abnormal one. It may be that his blood was much thicker than the average man's, thus still further slowing up the rate at which bubbles would form in his veins and arteries. Aside from that, his enormous chest gave him a lung capacity and a circulatory system far above ordinary, which may have enabled him to eliminate nitrogen from his body at such a rapid rate that a few minutes spent in rising rid him of nitrogen better than an hour's decompression served other divers.

On top of all, it seems probable that with his gigantic body he had a heart to correspond, a heart so large that an amount of entrapped air that would have killed an ordinary man, never noticeably incommoded him.

Whatever the reasons, this human Hercules made a record for immunity on thirty-two deep dives never since equalled, his regular daily performances without decompression being such as would make a modern diving supervisor stand aghast should one of his men suggest repeating even one of them.

But in the end, even Lambert pressed his luck too far. With $350,000 in gold coin salvaged from the *Alfonso XII* and $100,000 still remaining in the waterlogged chests left in the wreck, Lambert imprudently lengthened his thirty-third dive out to forty-five minutes, instead of rising after his usual twenty-five.

For a forty-five minute stay on the bottom, our present tables call for a decompression time of about ninety minutes. Lambert, as always, rose in less than five minutes, but this time even his magnificent body was unequal to the strain.

"The bends" got him at last. Half an hour after rising, he became suddenly and completely paralyzed from the waist down, and from that paralysis he never completely recovered.

ASIDE from caisson disease, a deep sea diver faces other troubles. One, briefly mentioned before, is "oxygen intoxication." Under a pressure of five atmospheres, for instance, with each breath he takes a diver gets five times the habitual quantity of oxygen to which nature has accustomed us.

This unusual dose of oxygen, carried to the brain and the nerve centers, gives them extraordinary stimulation and in some individuals produces an effect indistinguishable from alcoholic intoxication.

L'Heureux exhibited this effect, but he was not unique in that. Another diver on the same salvage job, and a competent worker previously in shallower water, exhibited such marked symptoms of an "oxygen jag" on his first dive in deep water that his mate, a veteran deep diver, after watching him staggering drunkenly over the heeled down deck of the *S-51,* had to hang on to him from reeling overboard.

Finally, despairing of getting any work done while clinging to an inebriated helper, he signaled us on the surface to haul them both up. That man we never used again except as a tender on deck.

A third case was somewhat different. This man, a diver with long experience, never failed to do a good job on the bottom, but once he hit the submarine, he invariably developed an "oxygen jag," singing to himself as merrily and as drunkenly as if he had one foot hooked over a brass rail hoisting in Scotch, and conversing, when he had to, over the telephone with every symptom of being "half seas over," and when he rose, he was still that way, vivacious, bubbling over, and absolutely happy until the effect of the oxygen wore off, when he relapsed into his normal morose state.

For oxygen intoxication there seems to be no remedy other than to eliminate from the diving roll those unduly susceptible.

Excess oxygen has one other effect even on those not intoxicated by it. Under a five atmosphere pressure, the diver gets as much oxygen per breath as if on the surface he was breathing in an oxygen tent, inhaling only pure oxygen. Breathing pure oxygen unduly stimulates the subject, for which reason it is given in some critical hospital cases to save a patient. The result is much the same as seen when an object is burned in pure oxygen rather than in ordinary air, which is diluted with about 80 per cent nitrogen. Combustion is far more rapid, the flame is far more brilliant, and the heat developed is far more intense.

Effectively, then, when a diver is under heavy pressure the combustion of his tissues is accelerated, the fat in his body is literally burned out of him after a few deep dives, and generally, thus stimulated, he is able to perform feats of muscular strength on the bottom that would be beyond him on the surface.

This is sometimes unfortunate when a diver is tempted actually to try some superhuman task, for it gives his body a strain to which normally he could never subject it.

THE ONLY diver I ever lost on a job, died as a result of this. James Frazer, chief torpedoman, six feet tall, two hundred pounds in weight, blond, blue-eyed, placid; in appearance, temperament, and intelligence, a modern Viking and at the time one of the Navy's veteran divers, was the first of all our salvage crew to reach the *S-51* wreck.

Throughout the early months on that job Frazer was my best man. Working with him was Francis Smith, another chief torpedoman. Smith was Frazer's direct antithesis—slight in figure, dark, sparkling in temperament. They made a perfect diving pair, partners in their every dive almost from the beginning, and the dangers these two went through in working on that smashed and corpse-filled submarine make one of the all-time epics of diving. But by courage and cool-headed thinking in moments of desperate peril both Frazer and Smith came out of every visible trap unscathed. What finally got Frazer was an intangible peril he never sensed.

We had to seal up an open hatch on the *S-51* to make her watertight. For that purpose, I had made a round steel plate about an inch and a half thick, fitted with a large valve on top and a heavy rubber hose beneath, long enough to reach the bottom inside the submarine's central compartment, through which hose we would expel the water inside her when the hatch cover was in place and the compartment sealed off.

The completed hatch assembly weighed about five hundred pounds, far too much for even two men to handle. So to get it into place, an improvised derrick and a half-ton chain block were rigged out from the conning tower of the submarine to plumb the hatch opening before Frazer and Smith finally dived to install the hatch assembly in the opening.

From the *Falcon's* main boom, we lowered the heavy hatch cover into the sea, guiding it down to its destination by a line which had been attached to the conning tower, but in the open ocean the rolling of the *Falcon* was so great as to prevent our dropping the load

just where we wanted it on the *S-51*.

At last, after several failures to land it properly, the disgusted Frazer signaled us from the bottom to let go, which we did. But the heavy mass landed not on deck but on the high rounded side of the submarine alongside the superstructure, where it perched precariously, too far away from the conning tower to hook it with the derrick chain fall and hoist it into place.

In that predicament, Frazer got out on the side of the submarine and, assisted as much as possible by Smith tugging on the rubber hose, almost single-handed heaved that 500 pound cover several feet up over the superstructure to the deck, a really Herculean feat which on the surface he could never have performed.

Shortly after being hauled up from the depths and aboard the *Falcon*, Frazer complained of a pain in his chest. Surgeon Flotte examined him; then, with a grave face he informed me that Frazer had badly dilated his heart, that he must never dive in deep water again. We put him ashore and into a hospital. After treatment there he came out some weeks later. The next few years he was in and out hospitals under treatment, and then suddenly his heart collapsed, and at thirty-six, James Frazer, as fine a diver and as fine a shipmate as one might ever hope to meet, dropped dead, a victim of an unseen peril, oxygen stimulation.

A FEW other hazards came from pressure, the worst of which is the "squeeze." To balance off the sea pressure, as explained before, the diving rig must be kept supplied with air at a pressure slightly greater than that of the surrounding sea. But to avoid getting too much buoyancy, only the helmet and a little space in the suit just below the breastplate actually contain any air, the remainder of the rig from there down being folded tightly in against the diver's legs and body by the water round about.

The pressure of the air in the lungs, however, is instantaneously communicated through the blood to every part of the diver's body, in a sense inflating him to counterbalance the weight of the sea, and thus he normally works. If, however, the pressure in his helmet is decreased, even slightly, a peculiar sensation results. Many times, while learning to dive, I have felt it. Let only a little too much air be bled off from the helmet, so that the internal body pressure is lower than that of the water, and the sea starts to press it in from every direction, giving the weird sensation of being tightly hugged all over. If a little more air is released, the hug of the sea becomes tighter and tighter, forcing the blood out of the legs first, then out of the lower abdomen, giving an "incipient squeeze" which is most painful and hazardous.

But a real "squeeze" never comes more than once to any man. In that case, usually as a consequence of a fall under water to much greater depth, the pressure suddenly increases on the diver as he goes deeper, before he can get enough additional air into his helmet to balance it. The result is instant and horrible death. The sea pressure, considerably exceeding the pressure in the helmet and the lungs, forces the blood from limbs and body in one vast hemorrhage into the chest cavity; then, taking the diver's body encased in his flexible dress, it rams him up into his inflexible copper helmet as if his frame had suddenly been put under a hydraulic press, moulding him into a jelly completely filling the helmet and leaving the rest of his body an unrecognizable mass of mangled flesh and protruding bones.

One instance of this occurred some years ago in coastal waters. An ocean liner, sunk there in collision, was being examined by divers, one of whom foolishly walked far forward on her sunken hull so that his lifelines no longer tended up and down to the salvage ship but ran in a long sweeping curve through the water down to him. Standing on the bow of the wreck, he lost his balance—whether from the swift tidal current or from a misstep, was never known. Overboard he went, and with his lifelines slack and nothing to support him,

plunged immediately to the bottom. The increased water pressure promptly "squeezed" him and what the tenders finally hauled up inside his suit could never have been thought a man.

A second case was more peculiar, in that it occurred not even in deep water, and under the shadow of New York's skyscrapers. While we on the *Falcon* were working out at sea in twenty-two fathoms, momentarily expecting death to strike at some diver struggling in a shattered wreck, a small commercial job was going forward in the East River, where, in only five fathoms of water, two divers were working on a submerged power house bulkhead.

They were diving from a small deckhouse scow from which a ladder led down to their work, with a compressor inside the deckhouse to provide the relatively slight air pressure they needed. On the scow one man casually tended both divers, whose airhoses were coupled up to a common manifold from the compressor.

Ashore the noon whistles in Brooklyn began to blow. Time to eat. The tender went over to the diving hoses, yanked each one in succession as a signal to the diver below to come up for dinner, and then, leaving his two divers to climb up the ladder from the muddy river bottom to the scow, he busied himself elsewhere about its deck.

A few minutes later he came back to the diving station. A trail of mud and water now led from the top of the ladder into the deckhouse. Concluding that both divers were up, he uncoupled their diving hoses from the compressor manifold, and then entered the deckhouse to help undress them. To his horror, inside that deckhouse there was only one diver!

Hastily the tender leaped outside, coupled up again the second airhose, frenziedly signaled to his man below. But there was no response. That brief interval with the hose uncoupled had been more than enough. The diver's air had all blown out of his helmet through the opened hose into the atmosphere above, leaving him without any pressure whatever, and the sea, slight though the depth was, had instantly pounced on him, "squeezing" him to death. A mangled corpse was all that came up when the distraught tender heaved in on the lifeline.

TO MINIMIZE the dangers of a "squeeze" the careful tender never for any reason lets go the lifelines of his diver from the moment he goes overboard until the time he is safely back on deck. We trained our tenders to "fish" their divers' lines, that is, to test continuously the slack of the lines by taking them up a trifle, as a fisherman sometimes does when he thinks he has a bite. If the lifelines showed slack, it was the tender's job then to take it in till he could just "feel" his diver.

It is not possible to keep the lines taut, for then the diver would find himself unable to move about, nor is it always possible to keep the lines up and down, for the diver working below may go some distance from the point of his descent, but too much of a sweep to the lines of a man working under conditions where a fall means a sharp drop into deeper water, should always be avoided.

It is best before sending a man down under such conditions to move the diving ship to plumb approximately the required working point, and never to allow the sweep of the lines to exceed a slight amount, so that a falling diver will bring up dangling at the end of his lines before he has dropped far enough to permit the sea to give him more than an "incipient squeeze."

Of course, on exploratory dives of new found wrecks, this isn't always possible until after the wreck has been well marked out, and the divers must take their chances as they go over the wreck, lifelines trailing them on a long sweep.

DIVING pressures have a peculiar effect on speech. We form our sounds by the action of the vocal cords, the teeth, the tongue, the palate, the lips, and the nose on the air escaping by them. But our human organs of speech are designed and accustomed to working on air of ordinary weight, and strange things

happen to our speech when the air starts to get unduly heavy.

When the pressure gets somewhat over three atmospheres, at depths beyond ninety feet, the diver's vocal troubles start. He is unable to form his sounds normally with his speech organs working on such heavy air, and his words, as heard on the surface over a telephone, often sound "mushed up" and sometimes unintelligible.

As an example, so heavy is the air below ninety feet that a diver cannot audibly whisper—assuming that he ever wished to do so unlikely a thing—and he cannot whistle. In neither case can the lips vibrate the dense air enough to make the slightest sound.

In deep sea work the voice loses all its individual quality. It becomes difficult to distinguish one man's voice from another's, and it takes an imaginative telephone tender to figure out what his diver is trying to say.

I have been on both ends of this dilemma. As salvage officer on the surface I don't doubt but that I have nearly driven some divers crazy by cross-examining them over the telephone, making them repeat in different forms the information they were trying to convey to make sure I understood what they were saying. And as a diver myself on the bottom, after having slowly and carefully articulated my words to make a message conveying my wishes clear to my telephone tender, I have often wondered how any human being could be so thick-headed as the man at the other end of my telephone line, and I have sometimes been driven to voluble profanity in my efforts to make myself understood over a diving telephone.

LAST but not least of the dangers a diver faces, is that of "blowing up." Naturally enough, like any other body placed in water, a diver must weigh more than the water he displaces or he will float. While the average human body is slightly heavier than water and will of itself usually sink—an unfortunate trait, as most of us have discovered in our efforts to learn to swim—once a copper helmet displacing a considerable volume of water is clapped on, ballast in the form of lead weighted shoes and a lead weighted belt must also be draped on the diver to make him heavy enough when submerged, so that the slightest current in the water does not waft him away like a feather in a breeze.

It is up to the diver on reaching bottom to regulate the amount of air inflating his suit so as to keep him heavy enough for the work at hand, but not so heavy that dragging his weighted form over the ocean floor wears him out. But whatever he does, every diver is trained never to lighten himself so much that he becomes positively buoyant and commences to float. If he does, the dangers he faces are extreme.

The man who by inexperience or miscalculation sets his inlet and exhaust air valves to keep a little too much air in his suit, immediately begins to float upward through the water. Unfortunately, however, he may not always note the fact immediately. As he rises a little, the water pressure on him decreases somewhat, due to the decreased depth, and the air in his rig expands still further, inflating his suit a little more and of course increasing his buoyancy and accelerating his rise.

Up to this point, a quick-thinking diver can still save himself by instantly and completely shutting off his incoming air and opening the exhaust valve in his helmet wide by bumping it with his chin, thus releasing enough air to deflate his rig and allow him to sink again, but woe to the man who doesn't recognize his danger in the first fathom of his rise and act promptly to correct matters.

For after that, he is helpless. The expanding air quickly swells out his suit, so inflating it that its ordinarily flexible canvas and rubber fabric becomes as rigid as sheet steel, and he finds himself utterly unable to bend his distended canvas sleeves enough to get his fingers in on his breast plate and shut off his air valve.

As he rises a little further and the pressure inside his suit still more exceeds the water pressure, his rig balloons

out completely, becomes as stiff as a board—looking now like a submarine blimp, he starts to shoot for the surface under the impulse of his enormous buoyancy. What happens after this is in the hands of fate.

Should he come up beneath the diving ship, he will ram it like a torpedo and dash out his brains. If by luck he misses the hull of the ship above, he will burst through the surface, shoot up into the air a moment like a leaping tarpon and —provided nothing has happened to his suit—fall back into the waves, to be reeled in by his tender like a hooked fish.

I HAVE seen three cases of "blowing up," one occurring with a novice and two with highly experienced divers.

The first mischance happened to a young seamen who trained as a deep sea diver in the same group with me and under the same instructors. Later, after I had myself made several dives in deep water on a wreck, it came this bluejacket's turn. His task on his first dive was simple, merely to pick up off the deck of a sunken submarine a small copper pipe elbow which a previous diver had carelessly set down on the sub's deck as he was preparing to rise.

The tenders dressed the youngster, a boy of about eighteen or twenty, and just before the helmet was dropped over his head, I gave him his instructions. Within six feet of where the descending line would land him on that submarine's deck, he would find this copper elbow lying alongside the engine room hatch. He was to pick it up, walk back to the descending line, and come up again immediately. His entire time on the bottom was to be not over a minute.

Overboard went the diver, and down the descending line as his tender paid out his air hose. Straight down with no delay he dropped into the depths, and length after length the lifelines went out after him over the rail. The hose slacked in the tender's hands, stopped running. The tender started to "fish" the lines.

"On the bottom!" sang out the man tending the new diver's telephone line.

I waited a little nervously, for any man's first dive is always a nerve-racking ordeal for the salvage officer on deck. A minute went by, and then a second one, and still no signal from the diver to start him up.

The telephone tender leaned over his transmitter, listened a moment, then looked up at me, puzzled.

"I can't make out what he says, sir."

That wasn't surprising. I gave up bothering with the telephone, stepped over to the tender handling the lifelines.

"Give him 'one'," I ordered, one jerk on the lifeline meaning "Are you all right?" and a return jerk of 'one' from the diver indicating "I am all right."

The tender at the rail obediently jerked the lifeline once, then, much surprised, replied:

"I can't 'feel' him, sir! The lines seem too slack!" He immediately began to take in slack so he could signal.

Slack lines? That was odd. No extra slack had been paid out, since the diver needed hardly to move from where he landed on the submarine. But before anything more could be done, the telephone man burst out,

"I can't make out what he's sayin', sir, but he just let out an awful yell!"

On top of that, the tender at the rail sang out,

"Something's wrong on the bottom, sir! I've got in a couple o' fathoms o' hose already, and the line are still slack!"

Something was wrong, all right. One continuous shriek was echoing in the telephone; at the rail, the tender, frantically heaving in lifeline, was unable to catch up with the slack. Then on the surface to starboard of the *Falcon* long coils of black airhose started to emerge, tangling in snaky loops among the waves. And immediately following them, shooting vertically upward into the air like a skyrocket, our diver flashed into view!

WITH suit ballooned out and arms spread-eagled stiffly sideways, before our startled eyes, he hung poised a moment above the waves like a seaplane taking off, water dripping copiously from his

grotesque figure. With a loud smack he then fell back into the sea, floating horizontally high in the water some sixty or seventy feet off our rail, and rising lightly to each passing wave.

"Heave in! Heave in!" I roared, fearful that his overstrained suit might burst any instant.

No urging was necessary. As fast as human hands and arms could work, the hose came in, to be piled, snarls and all, in a heap on deck. And on the end of the hose, towing helplessly face downward in the water, came our diver. Over the side at the end of the boom went our stage with two seamen on it, to be dropped instantly waist deep into the waves. They floated the prostrate diver in over the stage between them; we hoisted him aboard, shut off his air for him, yanked him upright, and deflated his rig. When we removed his helmet, he was absolutely white and so petrified with fear as to be speechless. As a precaution, we rushed him into the recompression chamber and gave him a moderate decompression, though there never was any chance of "the bends" getting him, for he had not been on the bottom long enough to soak up any noticeable quantity of nitrogen.

Except in being cured of any desire to dive again on that job, he showed no ill-effects from his startling rise and next day was back again on his former job as dresser to the other divers. He was completely unable to explain how he came to set his air valves wrongly.

A second case of "blowing up" came on the *S-4* and happened even more inexcusably, to a man who had been diving over fifteen years, being (with several others) at that time the holder of the world's record for depth in deep-sea diving. He, a veteran of many diving operations, on his first dive on the *S-4*, practically duplicated the experience above, first improperly adjusting his air, and then within a minute of reaching the *S-4*, finding himself helplessly spread-eagled in his suit and rocketing surfaceward.

That both these men missed killing themselves by coming up beneath the ship and ramming her at high speed was not wholly a matter of luck, for we always made it a practice to hold the *Falcon*, if possible, a little clear of the wreck below.

But the third case I observed was not so happy in that respect.

We were engaged in driving a tunnel through the clay and sand beneath the *S-51*, a difficult, nerve-racking business. For weeks on end, our divers stretched themselves out flat in the hard clay under that submarine in the confined tunnel, in absolute blackness and with a mixture of icy water, mud, and sand swirling around them, boring their way through by washing out the clay ahead with a stream from a firehose nozzle. A job more trying on a man's nerves it is difficult to imagine.

Tom Eadie, one of our experts, had on this occasion completed his hour's work and was on his way to the surface. With him on the little steel decompressing stage, some two square yards in area, was Joe Eiben, who had just finished some other task. The stage was at the ninety-foot depth, the first stop in decompressing a man.

There, suspended on a line dangling from the end of the Falcon's boom and vertically beneath our gunwale, forty-five feet to the bottom and twice as far from the surface, the two divers, experienced men both, began their decompression. As our routine demanded, both commenced exercising vigorously to stimulate their circulations and thereby accelerate the elimination of nitrogen from their systems. On deck, we began to get the next diver dressed and ready to slide down the descending line to pick up Eadie's discarded hose and resume the tunneling.

Then came a call on deck from the tender on Eadie's telephone:

"Tom's just sung out to me, but I can't make out what he wants!"

THAT was queer. With the men at ninety feet, they should just be coming into the range where the thinning air should no longer make speech difficult. I took Eadie's telephone, but while he certainly was saying something, it was com-

pletely unintelligible to me. Something seemed wrong with that telephone.

An idea struck me. Joe Eiben was on the tiny stage alongside Eadie. I took Eiben's telephone set, called out,

"Hello, Joe! Ask Tom what he wants!" That would quickly settle it, for all Eiben had to do was to put his helmet against Eadie's, get the answer, and phone it up to me. I listened intently. And then came a shock.

"Tom's not here!" replied Eiben. "What did you pull him up for?"

Pull him up? Nobody had pulled him up to my knowledge. A sudden leaden feeling gripped my stomach.

And then in my ears came a shout from Eiben, far below me in the sea.

"Eadie just fell back on the stage! His suit's nearly torn in half and he's full of water! Take him up quick!"

Eadie's rig torn open and Eadie drowning fifteen fathoms down? No time for decompression now. Action was swift. Half a dozen sailors seized Eadie's lines and began to heave in, but the weight on the end of those lifelines was tremendous. Evidently his suit was completely waterlogged, with no buoyancy left. More men grabbed the line wherever they could get a handhold and we heaved in desperately lest Eadie drown before we got him up. Meanwhile another stage was hurriedly dropped over the side with several men on it, and lowered partly into the water. And then in breathless suspense we waited, while hand over hand Eadie's lines came in over the gunwale.

A copper helmet at last rose into view. The men on the stage seized it and dragged it and the limp form inside the torn suit attached to it onto the steel platform.

The diving rig was a mess. With the canvas suit torn nearly in two just below the breastplate, with the leather straps which held the helmet down to the belt both parted, and, with the heavy lead belt draped around the ankles of the rig, nothing was in place except the shoes. There was no need to unscrew the helmet. We simply cut loose the shoes and dragged Eadie out of his rig through the gaping hole in its breast.

Eadie was very pale, half-strangled, bleeding badly from the mouth and nose as well as from a gash on his chin, but still semi-conscious.

We hustled him into the recompression tank and ran up fifty pounds pressure of air on him, while Surgeon Flotte began to dress his cuts and check his other injuries.

WHAT had happened? I learned hours later, when Eiben, who finished his decompression on the stage, had reached the deck and joined Eadie, who then lay wrapped in blankets in his bunk below.

On the little stage at ninety feet the two divers were exercising in the water to help decompression. Eadie, with his rig somewhat lightened up to lessen the weight, was jumping up and down on the stage, which hung from two triangular steel bails secured to lines some eight feet above the platform itself. Eiben was doing knee stoops. Each man, interested solely in making sure he was ridding himself of nitrogen, paid little attention to the other.

Suddenly the automatic exhaust valve on Eadie's helmet jammed in the closed position, and the inevitable happened. His suit, with the air escape now shut off, immediately started to swell out. His buoyancy increased, and up through the water he started. Recognizing the danger, Eadie tried at once to reach the control valve on his breastplate and shut off his incoming air, but so fast were things happening that before he could swing his gloved hand in on his chest to shut that valve, his suit had stiffened out so from internal pressure that it spread-eagled him. With arms helplessly stretched sidewise, for all the world like a farmer's scarecrow, he started to "blow up."

In real peril now, Eadie still kept his head. Unable to do anything for himself, he shouted into his telephone,

"Turn off my air on deck!"

That his telephone tender, receiving suddenly from the depths such an utterly unheard of order from a diver, failed completely to understand him, is natural

enough, and things with Eadie were happening too fast for him to repeat his request. He was completely off the stage and rising rapidly.

At that point in Eadie's narrative, I looked from Eadie to Eiben, who was seated on a stool alongside me in the narrow passage.

"Say, Joe," I asked, "what was the matter with you? Couldn't you see him 'blowing up' and grab his feet, at least, to stop him as he went by you?"

Eiben looked at me sheepishly.

"Yes, Commander," he muttered. "I saw him go by me out of the corner of my faceplate, but I just figured he was making an extra high jump there in the water and I went right on exercising."

I GLANCED inquiringly at Tom's worn face and he continued to explain weakly.

Still shooting upward, he thought fast. He knew, of course, that after a long dive, if he rose suddenly without decompression, he might finish with "the bends", but at the moment, that worried him little. What terrified him was the knowledge that the stage he had just left was suspended from the *Falcon's* side, and that he might well come up beneath her, with every prospect that the impact would flatten his helmet like a pancake and finish him then and there.

As he shot upward, completely helpless now, he saw the top of the steel bail from which the stage hung; it was flashing downward past him. He could do nothing to seize it with his spread-eagled arms, but instantly he thrust toward it both his weighted feet, and managed to hook the brass toe caps of both his diving shoes into the little triangle at the peak of that bail!

He stopped with a violent jerk that nearly tore his feet off his ankles, and there he hung by his toes, the tremendous buoyancy of his bulging rig straining to start him upward again, the while he prayed fervently that the stubby toe caps on his shoes might not tear off!

Once more he tried to bend an arm in and shut off his air, but it was impossible.

He thrust his head forward and bumped the inside of his exhaust valve with his chin, trying to free it and let the air escape, but it was jammed hard and he could not budge it.

Meanwhile, with more air entering all the time, hammered down to him by the compressors, the pressure in his already fully distended suit rapidly increased further, putting a fierce strain on the leather shoulder straps holding his helmet down to his belt. The heavy straps burst. No longer restrained, his canvas suit suddenly stretched upward, the helmet and breastplate rising instantly over half a yard. Firmly anchored down by his feet, he was unable to rise with it as his rig stretched out, and the copper collar of the breastplate, as it leaped skyward past his neck, hit him a clip on the chin that nearly broke his jaw and left him half-stunned and bleeding. Meanwhile, with nothing to support it any longer, his eighty pound lead belt dropped down round his feet, while the suddenly extended suit, more buoyant now than ever, increased sharply its lift and the pull on Eadie's toes became almost intolerable.

DAZED though he was by the blow on his chin and with his tortured body stretched as though gripped on a medieval rack, Eadie still kept his wits about him. Momentarily, at least, he had stopped himself; it did not seem possible that it could be for long. The telephone was now his only hope of aid. He threw back his head, shouted upward,

"On deck! Tell Joe to climb up to me, shut off my air and open my petcock!"

But with the telephone transmitter inside the helmet, and the helmet two feet above him it was not strange that no one on deck ever made him out.

Now the pressure inside Eadie's rig began to climb rapidly, nearly bursting his ear drums, and he commenced to bleed from both nose and mouth. The strain on his feet increased; he lost all hope, and was wondering only how much longer it would be before his toe-caps tore loose and he went rocketing upward to his death, when abruptly his suit burst!

Instantly, in one vast bubble, the air escaped to the sea, and his bulging canvas suit, completely deflated, shriveled in on him in the twinkling of an eye. Eadie nearly burst himself as the extra pressure suddenly left him, eardrums, sinuses, lungs almost exploding under the sharp reversal of tension. And then, no longer supported, down dropped his helmet, water poured into his suit through the gaping rent over his breast, and with no further buoyancy to sustain him, his lead ballast promptly dragged him downward, releasing his toes from their grip beneath the steel bail. Like a rock, he dropped down through the water, landing in a waterlogged tangle of canvas, lead, and copper on the stage at the feet of the dumfounded Eiben!

What his feelings were, fifteen fathoms down in a ruptured and flooded suit, dazedly struggling to avoid swallowing any water, can well be imagined. When on top of that he sensed that he was being heaved upward by lines attached only to his breastplate, while he himself lay limply huddled in a flooded suit which was already torn half across just below that breastplate, with the lead belt tangled round his feet and his lead weighted shoes dragging downward on the torn fabric, his mental agony was complete.

Curious, after his recital, I examined his exhaust valve to see why it had jammed. On disassembly of that exhaust valve, the trouble was immediately obvious.

While he was lying prone in the tunnel, working in the mud with his firehose, some muddy water, washing into his helmet past one side of his valve while air blew out the other, had carried a little sand into the valve housing, which sand, when he was coming up, had finally lodged in the valve sleeve, tightly jamming the valve stem and preventing it from sliding open. Just a few fine grains of sand, that was all, requiring a microscope almost to see them well, but they had come within a hair's breadth of killing one of our best divers.

So it goes. Between "bends" and "squeezes" and the other real dangers arising from air and water pressure, the diver always has enough to be concerned about without wasting time worrying about legendary monsters of the deep.

TRAIL AHEAD

To sea they went, the kilted Scots with their bagpipes squealing Highland tunes, and sailed their ship to Panama to found a colony in the New World. Fever and French and Spanish met them. They fought the fever with whiskey, they fought the Dons with claymores, they scuttled the French—and that made them pirates, with ropes waiting for their necks. A novelette of the little known and desperate expedition of 1698—

"Pirate Bagpipes"

by Robert Carse

H. Bedford-Jones gives us another in his dramatic series of the American fighting man—Bill Guffers, mountaineer and unreconstructed Reb, smokes up his old Confederate Enfield in the famous Wagon-Box fight against Red Cloud and his Sioux—in

"Galvanized, by Gum!"

The September issue is on sale August 10th.

The little nester wouldn't back down and he couldn't learn to shoot or fight, but between him and his kid they added up to make a man. No miracles are performed and there's dirt on the ground in the gripping Western novelette—

"Sod-Busters Were Born to Fight"

by Charles W. Tyler

author of "Baldy Sours and the Human Race"

Commander Ellsberg, in the last of the stories from his forthcoming book, "Men Under the Sea," tells us what helium is doing for the divers in great depths.

Ared White concludes his realistic serial, "Attack on America."

Oliver Hazard Perry tells the true story of the Civil War submarine that killed its own crews three times running. Richard Howell Watkins writes the story of a modern fight in Mayan ruins; Garnett Radcliffe tells a yarn of British soldiers and Afridi tribesmen.

IN

Adventure

15c

HIDEOUT

By LUKE SHORT

"What's the matter?" Marky drawled.

HE PUT his pistol away and tried not to look at his dead horse as he fumbled with numbed hands in an effort to get the saddle clear before it was drifted over. The wind boiled across the snow and beat his eyes shut, so that when he straightened into the full force of it, hefting his saddle, he was almost carried backward. He hung the saddle in a tree, a stubborn gesture of defiance that announced he would return, and afterwards he let the wind maul him down the timbered slope in the darkness, and he was a man without much hope.

Later, he found the stage road, found it by tripping and falling over the ridge of hard packed snow left by the stage wheels and now many inches under the rising white flood. Lying there on his face while the wind smoked across his back, his hand rested on the ridge made by the other wheel. It took a long time in his mind for the hint to turn into a hunch, and when it did and he lunged up into the weather again and saw the two dim parallel grooves sloping off across the timber, he shouted. For joy, maybe. or to remind himself that he had a voice.

The rest was just bulling it for another two dismal hours, and when the ground suddenly dipped and the timber fell away, and he faced a great unbroken sheet of snow which the wind was scouring tableflat, he knew it for the mountain meadow where Jim Hoskins and his wife ran the stage station.

It took him another forty-five minutes to reach Jim Hoskins' kitchen door, and when he threw it open and let the light blind him and the heat burn into his lungs, he was smiling, but not forgeting it.

"Why Sam Johns, you big fool!" Mrs. Hoskins said. "What are you doing out in this?"

Sam leaned against the door and slowly picked the frost rime from his lashes, thankful for the door against his back. He saw Mrs. Hoskins, fat and bluff and not very jolly, her arms floured up to the elbows, standing over a pan of bread dough, and a strange woman, a girl, beside her.

"Getting lost, mostly," Sam said through stiff lips, and he smiled wryly. He tramped over to the big iron range, hoping his steps didn't drag too much, and put his back to it, facing the two women. They were waiting for him to talk, and he knew he wasn't going to, because a man doesn't talk about being afraid and knowing despair, and besides, it was fast fading now. He would have been a big man even without a mackinaw, and a week's beard stubble couldn't hide the pleasant gauntness of his long face. He said mildly, "That bread smells good," and looked at the girl, whose wide blue eyes showed a concern that made Sam uncomfortable.

"Land, I bet you haven't eaten since morning, have you?" Mrs. Hoskins asked.

Longer than that, Sam thought, and said, "That's what I meant."

That brought a smile from Mrs. Hoskins and the girl too. Sam's body drank in the heat while Mrs. Hoskins told the girl to finish kneading the bread while she got Sam a bite to eat. To Sam, she said, "You take off your things and tote some wood into the big room. The stage had to lay over and I can't do everything for all these people."

"Yes, ma'm," Sam said mildly. He pulled off his mackinaw, still bitterly cold, and he was grateful for the look of sympathy from the girl. She knew he wanted more than anything in the world right now to stand near the stove and let it thaw the memory of these last hours from his mind and body, instead of running errands for this busybody woman.

He took a load of pine chunks in his arms and stepped into the corridor. It was flanked by two tiny cubby holes of rooms, the doors hung with curtains, and it opened onto the big bare room in front, which was the dining and living room. Halfway down the corridor, Mrs. Hoskins said from behind him, "Sam."

Sam stopped, and the big woman came close to him and in a whisper that was far more penetrating than her ordinary voice said, "I want you to bust up that poker game in there, you hear? Her man"—she nodded toward the kitchen—"is losing all the money they'll be married on, and he won't quit. You send Jim out here to me, and you take his hand. Then when your supper's ready I'll call you, and maybe your going will bust it up. You hear?"

"All right," Sam said patiently, and went on into the big room, sick with hunger.

HIS entrance brought lazy greetings from bearded Jim Hoskins and Marky Wolf, the stage driver, two of the four at a poker game being played on upended suitcases close to the big fat-bellied stove. Lying full length on a wall bench behind the stove was a thin little man in dapper city clothes, a scarf wound around his neck; and at his head, where she could watch over the shoulder of one of the players, sat a woman of the kind that earned her living in saloons and dance halls and frontier honkatonks.

She was a big bodied woman with a friendly, aging face, and she wore a heavy buffalo-skin coat over a dress that was too bright and too thin for either respectability or warmth.

She said, "Howdy," in a husky, friendly voice, and Sam smiled at her and dumped his wood by the stove. The little man behind it coughed softly and rhyth-

mically and apologetically, a pitch below the wind which tore at the log eaves of the building.

Big Marky Wolf, his face more weather-reddened than usual, looked up from his cards long enough to drawl understandingly, "You just about made it, Sam."

"Just about," Sam agreed, and then said dutifully, "Jim, your missus wants you."

Jim Hoskins swore lazily and rose and said, "Bet this for me, Sam," and after that Marky Wolf made the introductions. Frank Beecham, the man Sam had already paired with the woman, was a gambler by profession, as his dress proclaimed. He had eyed Sam with suspicion since he entered the room, and now made no offer to shake hands.

He was a lean man, with a dissipated pale wedge of a face, and his black eyes had a gall in them that stirred a slow anger in Sam. Without having to be told, he knew that the girl in the kitchen would never choose this man for a husband, so it was the remaining player whom Sam studied carefully after shaking his hand.

Carter McCune was the kind that made Sam Johns instinctively wary. He was a blond young man dressed in a rich black suit, but behind his tense smile and impatient good manners was a kind of arrogance that nothing could hide. It was in his hazel eyes, which were overlaid with a look of driving shrewdness that Sam had seen in the eyes of crooked horse-traders.

Sam sagged into a chair and beat his mind to alertness, for Jim Hoskins, like many a stage station owner, counted poker a more remunerative business than feeding and bedding travelers when the stage had to lay over. A greenhorn didn't stand a chance.

Sam hung on through two hands, his stomach aching with a miserable hunger, and then Mrs. Hoskins called him and he rose, watching for the game to break up.

But before he had left the room, it was settled that the game would go on three-handed, and Sam went out with the knowledge that Mrs. Hoskins was defeated, and not caring much.

THERE was only the girl in the kitchen, standing by the stove, and she nodded to the table where a place was set.

"Mrs. Hoskins said to eat."

Sam did. When he had wolfed down a plateful of steak and potatoes, the girl was there to help him to a second and they did not talk. Beyond, in one of the rooms, came the sound of a bitter argument being carried on in subdued voices between Jim and Mrs. Hoskins. The wind lashed the log walls and wailed above the creaking chimney. When Sam at last leaned back in his chair and reached for his sack of tobacco in his shirt pocket, he glanced up at the girl. She was half facing the range, her hands spread low over the lids, and her face was sad. The lamp in the wall bracket by the stove seemed to make a halo of light over her wheat colored hair.

Suddenly, she said without turning around, "Thanks for trying, anyway, Sam." She turned her head to look at him. "Has he lost much?"

Sam's face went hot, and he tried to look surprised.

"I overheard Mrs. Hoskins tell you," she said. "Has he lost much?"

Sam remembered the diminishing pile of gold coins in front of McCune and said, "Yes, ma'm," and concentrated on the cigarette he was making.

The girl didn't say anything for a long moment, and then she murmured in a low, bitter voice, "Have you ever watched everything you own trickle away into nothing, and know you couldn't stop it?"

"Yes, ma'm," Sam said quietly.

Slowly, the girl turned, surprise and doubt washing over her face.

"When?"

"Today."

She was silent a moment. "How was that?"

"Every head of cattle I own has been up in summer range in these mountains. Last week I come to round 'em up and drive them down." He looked down at his cigarette. "I didn't make it," he added briefly.

The girl looked searchingly at him and then turned back to the stove. Sam sat there in silence, feeling the strength

and a kind of peace flow back into him, listening to the howling of the hurricane wind outside. The girl came over and sat in the chair opposite him, and when Sam glanced up she was looking into his eyes.

"Go on with it," she said.

"That's all there is."

"I don't mean that. It seems like we're in the same boat." Her voice dropped. "I saved that five hundred dollars teaching school. Carter was going to buy a share in Mr. Markham's store in Globe. We were going to be married. I want to hear what you're going to do now that you've lost your cattle."

Sam thought a minute.

"I don't know," he said at last. "I'm a pretty good cattleman. I couldn't call a fall blizzard, but I reckon I came as close to it as other cattlemen. I think the bank will loan me money. I'll try again."

"I can't try again!" the girl said passionately. "I began teaching school when I was sixteen, and I'm twenty-four now!"

Sam asked curiously, "Couldn't you stop him?"

"No."

Sam said something he knew was mealy-mouthed, then. "Maybe marriage will change him."

He was glad Mrs. Hoskins came into the kitchen then, because the girl would have said something she would have regretted. Sam rose and put his cigarette in the stove and then went into the front room, a dull anger riding him.

SAM had just put his back to the stove when Frank Beecham, the gambler, slammed his cards down and turned to the woman, fury in his voice. "My God, Trix, can't you make him shut up that coughing?"

Trix's hand ceased moving, and the coughing went on, a little more softly and just as insistent.

"The poor man's sick," Trix murmured, a touch of resentment in her voice and none in her eyes.

Beecham got up and stamped around the other players. Marky regarded him speculatively, as if wondering at his sudden nerves, and then looked at Trix. McCune tapped nervously on the back of his cards and said, "You've got a stake in that pot, Beecham."

"Hell with it!" Beecham snarled and came to rest beside Sam, his back to the stove. The little man was coughing again when the game was resumed.

Beecham glanced obliquely at Sam and said, "Which way'd you come?"

"East," Sam answered, distaste in his voice.

"From Van Horn?"

Sam was too weary to explain, and didn't want to anyway, so he told a half truth and said, "Yes," although it had been a week and a half since he had seen the town. He looked at the back of McCune's head and beat his tired brain toward thinking of a way to break up the game. Beecham, after a moment, said without turning around, "Come in here, Trix," and walked into one of the bedrooms. The woman followed him, and there was the look in her eyes of a dog who answers his master's call, not knowing whether he will be petted or cuffed. The little man coughed and coughed, his hand over his mouth.

Sam went over to the bench and sat beside him. He said gently, to him, "You're too close to the stove, partner. That heat makes you cough."

The little man sat up then, and smiled and said huskily, "Maybe you're right." He rose and moved across the room to a bench by the big table, and Sam leaned back against the wall, watching McCune. He wasn't pretty to look at now, with his handsome face a little gray with excitement. With the ruthlessness acquired in a hundred saloons on a thousand nights, Jim Hoskins and Marky were taking turns at winning his money. Her money, Sam thought.

He was glad when at last McCune stood up and said, "Well, I'm cleaned, gentlemen."

Marky nodded and said with mild bluntness, "You don't know a hell of a lot about poker, Mister."

McCUNE laughed bitterly and tramped out into the kitchen. A sudden disgust welled up in Sam, disgust with McCune for losing the money and disgust

with Marky for taking it. He went over to the table and sat down beside the little man, and because he did not want to think of what was going on right now between the girl and McCune in the kitchen, he felt a wild urge to talk, to blot it from his mind.

The little man looked at him shyly across the table, and when he got Sam's answering smile he reached in his vest and pulled out a wallet from which he took a card, and laid it in front of Sam. It was the business card of Kentucky Friends Distillery in Fort Worth. In a lower corner was printed 'Mr. Wiley Brokaw, Representative.'

"Ever drink our product?" the little man asked.

Sam grinned. "I might have."

"A sound sour-mash whiskey," the little man went on. He smiled shyly. "Never drink it myself. Can't. But I've sold it for years." He went on talking of the difference in whiskies, stopping to cough softly now and then, and Sam wondered what bitter necessity had driven him to a job for which he was so ill suited. And while Sam listened, the girl and McCune came back into the room. There had been bitter words out there in the kitchen, he could tell. McCune went to the stove and stood there sulking, while the girl came over and sat down beside the whiskey drummer and listened absently.

They were all this way, with Marky, lighted lantern at his feet, putting on his coat to have a look at the horses in the barn, and Beecham and Trixie still in the back room, when the sudden kick came on the front door. Then the latch bar lifted and a plume of riding snow hissed aganst the stove and a man stepped inside and leaned against the door to shut it.

He wore a faded blue army overcoat which somehow he had contrived to unbutton and open between the time he shut the door and when he turned to face the room; and Sam understood that necessity when Marky swung his lantern up to get a look at the man's face. It was the small face of a slight man, finely shaped and leaned down until every muscle showed, and above the full black mustache frozen stiffly, the color had been driven high into the cheekbones by the cold. Above them was a pair of alert, steady brown eyes.

If a man was in doubt about the face, he had only to look at the hands. For this stranger, now, was taking two mittens off his right hand, his gun hand, while his left hand was bare and white with the cold.

But Sam had no need to look at the hands. Once every two weeks for a year he had seen that face—on the yellowing reward poster nailed up beside the window at the postoffice. He even remembered that the printer had inserted a comma instead of a period in the big bold-faced line of type: "$5000,00 Reward, Dead or Alive."

Jim and his wife and Beecham and Trixie had all come into the room at the sound of the opening door; and now Sam watched these people, just as Lex Quayle, the outlaw, was watching them, and he saw what Lex saw; that three people—himself, Marky Wolf, and Carter McCune—knew the stranger; the rest were only curious.

Sam said gently, "Mrs. Hoskins, he's likely hungrier than I was."

"I can believe that on this night," Mrs. Hoskins said, and went into the kitchen.

"Let me help you off with that coat," Trixie said in a friendly, motherly way, and crossed over to him.

Beecham said sharply, "He's no cripple, Trix."

Marky Wolf said mildly, "I better look at them horses."

And Lex Quayle said in a regretful voice, "This storm cost me a mighty nice horse."

And the wind wailed and tore at the log building, while Carter McCune watched the outlaw with a kind of careful, taut interest. And Sam, knowing greed when he saw it in a man's eyes, knew that the seed, which had fallen on the barren soil of his own recognition, had taken hold in McCune. That sorry gambler of a man was already thinking that while he had dropped five hundred dollars tonight, five thousand dollars had just walked into the room and was his for the taking.

Lex Quayle saw it in McCune's face, too. His quick brown eyes took in Mc-

Cune's figure, noting the absence of a gun belt, sizing him up as a potential threat, and then they dismissed him. He said to Trix with a brief smile, "I'll keep my coat on, thanks. I'm cold."

The friendliness in the whiskey-drummer's eyes glowed behind the fever as he looked at Quayle. "So you had to shoot your horse."

Quayle nodded faintly.

"That makes a man feel bad," the little man said, in sympathy.

"It does that," Quayle said, and there was something in his tone that said he was grateful.

MRS. HOSKINS came in and said, "You can eat now."

Quayle, with a sharp warning look at McCune, put his back to him and walked out into the kitchen. Mrs. Hoskins looked over the crowd and then announced, "Miss Virginia and me are going to sleep in the west room. The rest of you will have to make out the best you can with the bed and the cot in the other room."

She was looking at Trixie, and there was an implacable righteousness in her face, the look of a good woman who can safely be cruel to a bad one.

The little whiskey drummer said sturdily, "I guess we can fix the cot up for the other lady."

Mrs. Hoskins sniffed audibly. "If I was as sick as you are, I'd claim that cot and get some sleep."

She was still looking at Trix, whose face was getting hard with humiliation.

"I don't sleep much," the whiskey drummer said mildly. "She can have my bed and welcome."

Mrs. Hoskins went out, but Sam didn't notice her. He was watching McCune with a kind of dread gathering within him. McCune came over to the girl, and without any attempt at privacy he said in a low excited voice, "Virginia, do you know—"

Sam came to his feet, smacking his palm on the table. "Shut up!"

The cold fury of his voice cut through McCune's speech and brought silence.

"Sometimes," Sam said thickly, "mindin' your business means the difference between walkin' out of a place and bein' carried out. This is one of those times, McCune."

All of them were watching Sam, mystified, and now they looked at McCune. He regarded Sam a long time with those shrewd and cunning eyes and then he said sulkily, "All right," and went over to the stove and stoked it.

Sam knew the girl, Virginia, was watching him in a vain attempt to get a clue to his meaning.

He said dully, "I'm going to bed."

Beecham, off in the corner, said, "You ought to," but when Sam shuttled his hot gaze to stare at him, Beecham added hastily, "We all ought to."

Beecham followed Sam into the tiny room, and when Sam had lighted the lamp he looked around him. There was an iron double bed, piled high with blankets, and a cot. Beecham walked over to the cot and pulled off a boot.

"Get up," Sam said shortly.

Beecham looked up, mock innocence on his face. "You and McCune have got the bed. What are you kickin' about?"

"That cot is for Trix," Sam said gently, ominously.

"She's my woman. Let her sleep on the floor," Beecham sneered. "It won't be the first time."

Sam took a step toward him, and put both hands on his hips.

"Beecham," he said softly, "I've been wanting to make your face over ever since I saw it. I think I will."

Beecham caught the tone of his voice. In silence, he picked up his boot and moved over to the bed, his eyes sultry. Sam ripped a blanket from the bed, threw it on the cot, and carried both into the front room. He said good night, not looking at Virginia, and tramped back into the corridor. Quayle, still in his army coat, was standing at the kitchen end of the corridor. He said, "You. Come here."

He backed into the kitchen and Sam came up to face him. Quayle studied him a scant moment, then said, "You know me." It wasn't a question; it was a statement of fact.

"Yes."

"So does that counter-jumper in there."

"Yes."

Quayle stared levelly at him and said, "You don't look like a bounty hunter."

"I'm not."

Quayle almost smiled. He nodded his head toward the door. "That driver says there's blankets from the stage. Him and me will sleep in the loft." He paused, then added mildly, "I'm pretty easy to get along with if nobody crowds me."

"That's what I figured," Sam said.

"Just as long as both of you don't forget it," Quayle said amiably. "Good night." He wrapped his coat around him, and went out into the howling blackness.

IT WAS still dark when Sam was roused by the sound of Jim Hoskins shaking the ashes from the big range in the kitchen. Sam rose and went into the big room to build a fire. The lamp was turned low on the table, and on a bench against the wall Mr. Wiley Brokaw, covered with Trix's buffalo coat, was asleep, his head on Trix's lap. She was sitting up, the blanket around her shoulders, and when she saw Sam she smiled sleepily.

"He got to sleep about an hour ago," she said quietly, looking over at the bench. "Poor man."

"He needs a rest," Sam said gently.

Trixie laughed without humor. "When you're supportin' your dead brother's kids on the money he gets, you don't take time to rest," she said grimly. "We talked last night, after you was all asleep." She looked at Sam. "He's all right, he is," she said quietly, and then added, with a trace of hopeless bitterness in her voice, "except he's goin' to kill hisself if he don't get some rest and women's food in him."

Sam built the fire quietly, thinking of the little whiskey drummer, and then of McCune, asleep in there with Beecham. One would wake to a lonely day of fighting against sickness; the other to the love of a woman far too good for him.

It angered Sam and he went out into the kitchen. When he was washed, he and Jim, bundled in all the clothes they could find, went out into the cold dawn to thaw out the pump and to water the stock. The dawn came still and cold and brittle as glass, with the sky the color of frost-rimmed steel. Sam was glad for work to do, for he did not like the idea of watching Virginia, knowing he was unable to help her. The sun had just laid a jagged saw-tooth of shadow over the spotless meadow as it came up through the far timber when the triangle clanged for breakfast. Jim, Marky and Sam tramped into the house, which was warm and smelling of bacon and coffee and the hot metal of the stove.

Virginia was helping Mrs. Hoskins carry the food into the big room up front, where the breakfast table was set. Sam did not look at her, did not want to. He went into the bedroom, peeled off his borrowed overcoat and mackinaw and hung them up. It was then he saw his gun-belt hanging on the nail where he had put it the night before.

His gun was gone.

He was standing there staring at the empty holster when he heard Virginia's voice say, "Good morning, Sam."

She was standing in the doorway, her hand holding the curtain back, a faint friendly smile on her face, and Sam thought she was the loveliest and saddest looking woman he had ever seen.

"I'm going to take my licking, just like you are," she said. "I just wanted you to know I wasn't going to quit."

"It'll be all right," Sam said. There was nothing else to say.

She went back into the kitchen, and Sam, troubled, went into the big room. They were all taking their places now, except Lex Quayle. He was standing by the stove, and his nod to Sam was amiable enough. Lex waited until Carter McCune chose a seat with his back to the room, and then Lex walked over and took the place beside him.

McCune said surlily, "I was saving that for Virginia."

Virginia, who was filling the cups from a huge pot of coffee, said quickly, "I'll help Mrs. Hoskins, Carter, and get a bite in the kitchen."

Sam saw Lex grin secretly into his plate at that, and then the swell of talk rose. Marky announced that he would take the empty stage after breakfast and break a trail across the deep snow of the meadow. If he succeeded in reaching the timber, he would come back for his passengers, certain that he would be able

to make it from there on. Sam listened to all the talk in silence, and behind his silence was the memory of the stolen gun. Who had it? He thought he knew, and he hated himself for guessing the reason. Marky soon rose and went out, and Jim Hoskins followed, while Beecham finished and sat back picking his teeth, glaring at Trix and the little whiskey drummer, who sat together at the far end of the table.

IT WAS while Virginia was leaning across to fill Sam's cup that Lex Quayle raised a hand and said sharply, "Quiet, everybody!"

The talk died off. They all looked at Quayle, who had his head cocked to one side, as if listening.

A faint halloo, far off in the winter morning, came to them, and Mrs. Hoskins, in the doorway, said, "It's the upstage at the edge of the meadow, I'll declare. They'll probably want Jim to help them break a trail across."

Lex Quayle, his face taut, rose and hurried to the window.

And then, because Lex's back was turned, it happened.

Carter McCune rose stealthily, stepped over the bench, and even as he moved his right hand went to his hip pocket. He was just swinging up Sam's gun when Sam, at last fighting free of the bench, dived across the table. He slammed into McCune's back, and on the heel of it came the shot, and then they went down together.

There was a faint jangle of glass after the shot and Lex whipped around, a gun already in his hand, to see Sam drive McCune to the floor.

McCune's gun skidded across the floor, and he rolled to his knees. Sam came up to face him, and without looking at Lex he said, "Don't do it, Lex!"

McCune's face was livid with rage, and in his anger he had even forgotten that Lex could shoot him. He came at Sam, arms flailing, and Sam drove a blow against his jaw that slammed him back against the wall, shaking the timbers.

Sam said through his teeth, "Damn your yellow belly, you go careful!"

"Carter!" Virginia cried.

But McCune was lost to advice. He came in again, great sobs of anger chokin ghim. And then Sam did what he had been wanting to do for so long. He lost his temper. With a low growl, he swept McCune's guard aside and drove a fist into his midriff, and then laced over a hook that sent McCune back against the wall again. But this time Sam did not wait for him to come away. Feet planted wide, he moved in, his heavy fists slogging in wide arcs and beating a sickening rhythm on McCune's body and face.

The hurt of it sobered McCune and he tried to cover up, but all the hate and contempt that had been riding Sam these long hours had come to a head. He fought with a savage, merciless brutality, and even McCune's kicks could not stop him. He grabbed McCune's hair and yanked back his head, and then with his free hand he beat his face time and again, and when his hold slipped, McCune sagged to the floor like an empty sack and lay there at his feet.

Sam stirred his body with the toe of his boot, the last gesture of contempt, and then turned away from him, and found himself facing Lex Quayle.

"You made a mistake," Quayle said shortly. "You should have let me have him." He raised a hand to his hat brim in a kind of sardonic salute. "I'm proud to have met a man whose idea of a fair target is not my back. Thanks." He nodded to the rest of them and then headed for the kitchen. Passing the table, he flipped a gold piece onto it, and then they heard him closing the back door.

Marky Wolf, who had come in during the fight, announced in that silence, "Better get your wraps, folks. We'll try to break our half the trail loaded."

The rest of them moved toward their coats—all except Virginia. She stood beside Sam, looking down at McCune, and Sam did not know what to say.

It was she who spoke first.

"Can you get him into his coat?" she asked.

While she was getting the coat, Sam hoisted McCune's sagging body to the bench. His nose was bleeding all over his clothes, and one eye was swelling shut and his mouth was cut, and he kept shaking his head from side to side. Marky Wolf, burly in his great buffalo

coat, stood in the middle of the floor, grinning at the sight of him.

There was a sudden raising of voices in the bedroom, and then the sound of flesh smacking flesh. Beecham's voice said angrily, "Trix! Come back here!"

Trix came out of the corridor running, and headed for the front door. She tugged vainly at the big bolt as Beecham elbowed past Mrs. Hoskins and strode after her.

Marky raised a burly arm and barred his way.

"What's the matter?" Marky drawled.

Beecham's face was ugly with anger. He raised a thin arm and pointed to Trix. "That damn wench robbed me!"

"You're a liar!" Trix said hotly.

Mrs. Hoskins said, "I'll have none of that talk!" in a stern voice.

But Trix had been pushed too far. She said to Marky, "Frank won seven thousand dollars in a crooked poker game at Van Horn two days ago. He's runnin' away now." She pointed to Sam. "Frank thought this man had been sent after him last night to get the money, so he gave it to me to keep."

She looked at Frank and sneered. "I gave it back to him—all but five hundred dollars. And I put that in Mr. Brokaw's wallet last night when he slept. He needs it worse than that tin-horn!"

Marky's hand came down, as Beecham yelled, "You're lying."

Marky said, "Wait a minute." To Mrs. Hoskins he said, "Will you have a free bed for a couple of days, Mrs. Hoskins?"

Puzzled, and still outraged, Mrs. Hoskins said, "Why—yes."

"Good," Marky said. He took off his mitten and hit Frank Beecham in the face as hard as he could swing. Beecham fell as if struck by lightning. Marky, rubbing his knuckles, said, "All right, put him in it, Mrs. Hoskins."

They headed for the door and Virginia, came into the room with McCune's.

IN SILENCE, Sam held McCune erect while Virginia put his coat and hat on. Afterwards, between them they carried him out to the stage.

Trix and Brokaw, side by side, sat in the seat facing the horses, robes pulled up to their chins. McCune, at sight of the stage, stopped and wrenched free of Sam's grip. He turned to Virginia and muttered hotly, "I did it for money, Virginia! If he hadn't stopped me, we would have had five thousand dollars!"

"Get in," Virginia said patiently.

McCune straightened up and took Virginia's elbow.

"After you," he said coldly.

Virginia freed her elbow.

"I'm not going, Carter," she said quietly. "I could live with a fool, maybe. But I could not live with a man who would shoot another man in the back for money." She stepped away. "Good-by, and good luck. I'll never see you again."

"But—"

Marky Wolf put a hand on his arm. "You heard her. Get in."

McCune gave Virginia one last bitter, helpless glance, and then he climbed in. Marky swung up in the seat, picked up the ribbons, and Jim Hoskins let go the lead horse's bit. The teams plunged into the deep snow. Behind the stage was Lex Quayle, mounted on one of Hoskins' horses. He nodded gravely as he passed Sam and Virginia, standing together in the deep snow of the yard. Both of them watched while the two stages, their teams laboring in great clouds of steam rising from their backs, slogged through the snow until they met in the middle of the meadow. They saw Lex Quayle put his horse out into the snow and pull past the two stages to the broken trail beyond, and then put spurs to his horse and vanish into the timber.

Virginia sighed then, and looked up at Sam. "Thanks, Sam—for everything."

"You're going back?"

"To teach school again," Virginia said quietly.

Sam put both hands on her arms and turned her around to face him.

"Not while I can talk," he said. He started to say something, and it wouldn't come. Three times he tried, and failed.

Finally, he said, "I have got something to ask you, Virginia. Maybe I can ask it before we get to Van Horn."

Virginia smiled softly and said, "I will listen to you this time too, Sam."

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

GEORGES SURDEZ sends some notes to Camp-Fire on the "volunteer" *groupes-francs* sent out by the Foreign Legion on jobs that must be done with a neat efficiency in spite of being bloody and unusually dangerous. He comments:

It would be useless to seek in the official records of the French Army for such an outfit as the *groupe-francs* mentioned in MAN-AT-ARMS. It is not a permanent, recognized formation, such as a regiment, a battalion, a company, but one assembled and trained for a special, particular purpose. The men in the *groupes-francs* continue to be attached officially to the various corps from which recruited, wear their uniforms, numerals and badges. In theory, they are all volunteers. I was given to understand, however, that in some cases, especially during the World War, a man might be assigned to such duty as a punishment. Of course, the expression is: To grant him an opportunity of redeeming himself.

I have heard of a *groupe-franc* formed in a company of Foreign Legion for night raiding only eight men in strength, commanded by a sergeant. And of another one, in a Moroccan Mobile Group, which gathered over two hundred men and was commanded by a captain. Those outfits have no official history. The records of Moroccan Campaigns ordinarily include them with the anonymous mass of *supplétive forces*, irregular native units, local militia etc., and seldom describe their activities at length. That is to be regretted, for some of their exploits would read like a fantastic, unbelievable saga. More than one successful attack by the regular battalions should be credited to the dangerous and obscure preliminary work of the 'free groups'.

There are those who will identify Captain Jacot. Whether the group is large or small, led by a sergeant or an officer, the commander must unite definite qualities—endurance, patience, calm, guts . . . and ruthlessness. I placed a brace of negroes in the group, which may seem exceptional as African blacks as a rule are not at their best in the darkness, against Moroccans. But when a Wolof or a Bambara happens to be gifted for that job, he is likely to be very capable. I met one, over six feet tall, who handled two hundred and twenty pounds of body like a professional acrobat. I can imagine much more pleasing prospects than to have him crawl after me with a trench knife between his teeth.

The weight carried by Fremont across that plank thrown over the courtyard may be surprising. I argued with a 'raider' once on that point and he made up a list, explaining: "It was on a long raid, due to last four to seven days. So you had to have a lot of junk along. And, usually, you tote around even more, because you can't leave rifles and cartridges behind when a guy gets bumped. The trick is to carry the stuff so it won't knock together and make noise."

Here is a tentative list:

(A kilogram is 2.204 pounds)

Light coat and shirt	1 k 200
Breeches	1 . 300
Puttees, turban	0 . 500
Light footgear	1 . 000
Tent cloth	1 . 000
2 musette-bags	0 . 450
Canteen—two quarts of water	2 . 250
Mess-kit, tin cup, spoon, knife	0 . 500
Trenching tool	1 . 500
Rations (Sardines .100 Meat .400 —Canned meat .600 — Hardtack .600—Chocolate .250—Sausage or cheese .300 etc. Two or three days	2 . 750
Rifle, bayonet, scabbard	5 . 000
Rifle ammunition	3 . 600
Automatic pistol	0 . 800
Cartridges for pistol	0 . 600
Trench knife	0 . 600
Grenades	6 . 000
	29.500

Plus personal stuff, watch, notebook etc.

Plus group-equipment, signal-pistol and ammunition etc., distributed to men who carry fewer than ten grenades.

IT'S a pleasure to announce the appointment of Murl E. Thrush, wrestling coach of the New York Athletic Club, as wrestling expert on the *Ask Adventure* staff. Perhaps no name is better known in amateur wrestling circles. He comes from the West, where wrestling is a very popular sport, as it was all over the country in colonial times. He has been working successfully to popularize wrestling in the East. In the way of coaching football, he has noted, he told us, that the lads from the East instinctively favor a running game and, while not afraid to tackle, do not go into it with the zest of the western boys with their background of village and crossroads wrestling matches. Mr. Thrush's off-hour hobby is golf. This is alien to wrestling, and serves to loosen muscles that wrestling tightens. Because of his knowledge of muscles, and his natural athletic ability, he has had unusual results in coaching friends into better golf scores. He says:

I consider it an honor to be selected as wrestling expert for *Adventure Magazine.*

You asked me to send you a profile of my educational and wrestling background, so here goes.

I started to wrestle at Fredrick High School in Oklahoma during my first year there. I was a very scrawny boy at the age of thirteen. I was privileged to have Guy Lookabough, a National Inter-Collegiate Champion, as my first coach. Later in my high school career, I had Clifford Keen as a coach. Mr. Keen is now head wrestling coach at Michigan University. Both of these men wrestled on the famous Oklahoma A. and M. team and were stars.

After graduating from high school, I matriculated at Michigan University and wrestled three years under Coach Keen. I wrestled as a varsity member. In 1927 I was a member of the Big Ten Championship team.

In 1929, I was selected as wrestling coach at the New York Athletic Club. I have been coaching and teaching men and boys of all ages for the past ten years.

In addition to my work at the club, I have been teaching Health and Physical Education in the New York City School System for the past five years.

In my present position I have instituted a self defense activity where over four thousand boys are taught the elements of amateur wrestling each term.

My varsity wrestling teams at the New York Athletic Club have won the Metropolitan Championship for the last ten years, and the National A. A. U. Championship three years. During this time I have coached and developed fifteen National Champions and one Olympic title holder.

I have refereed wrestling bouts for the Eastern Intercollegiate Colleges for seven years. In 1938 I was selected as head referee for the Eastern Intercollegiate Association.

I specialized in Health Education at Michigan University, Columbia University and New York University. I received my B. S. degree from Columbia in 1931 and a Masters Degree from New York University in 1932.

My position at the club gives me an excellent opportunity for me to meet both amateur and professional wrestlers from all over the world.

HERE'S a comrade who listened to the talk at Camp-Fire on the 400-yard shooting of Wild Bill Hickok—the pro and con on whether Wild Bill's shooting prowess has been exaggerated out of human possibility—and then took his own gun out to see. He doesn't agree at all with the critics. He is Stafford Lewis, of Rockport, Washington, and he says:

I followed "Peace Marshal" by Frank Gruber with interest and enjoyment, feeling the author has done a fine job and knows his subject and background as I have read a few biographies of the old time peace marshals.

The letters complaining about the impossibility of effective 400 yard shooting with a Frontier Model 45 or other type of pistol are all wet, (my Colt catalogue is still in Seattle, but believe Colt's refer to the gun in question as the Single Action Army model, which is still being manufactured and sold).

Research on this 20 year dead argument has taken me some time.

However, I belong to the Elliot Bay Revolver Club of Seattle, took my new model High Standard automatic, 22 caliber, out to Fort Lawton and experimented. Now 22 and 45 muzzle velocity in pistols and their range are somewhat the same, although the 22 is the more accurate due to the bullet factor of the 45 bullet. Without benefit of binoculars or anything but a six foot rifle target, my pistol and the dust spurts of the bullets—didn't even reset my target sights—I found I could place two bullets out of eight in that six foot target at 400 yards, using a car door for a rest. I had to aim high above the target, glimpsing it thru the sides of the rear sight not filled up by the front sight. At 200 yards it is not at all hard to put all bullets in the target. Three hundred and 400 yard ranges are much more difficult.

I feel this proves an expert could easily endanger a man at 400 yards—every pistol shot I know agrees they wouldn't want to be shot at at this range, and this is what shooting effectively means. I don't mean accurately, there is a difference. Consider also that I had never before shot either pistol or rifle at any target over 100 yards away—20 yards was the most with a pistol, and that several club members can shoot better offhand than I can with a rest.

This long range stuff is a science, as the 1,000 yard rifle shooters will tell you. I feel that 400 yard pistol shooting is comparable with 1,000 yard rifle shooting.

Ed McGivern of Montana, a nationally famous pistol shooter, tested the Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum from 15 to 600 yards and found it possible to shoot *accurately* at these extreme ranges. Granted the magnum is the most powerful *factory-loaded* cartridge offered to pistol shooters, yet hand loaded cartridges are a different story. Hand loaded shells have been known to split revolver cylinders and otherwise ruin handguns through being too powerful for the gun's strength. They are usually more powerful than factory loads when used for hunting, etc., and all shells, practically, were hand loaded in the 1870's, at least in the West where the action of Mr. Gruber's story takes place.

Add to this, an article in the *American Rifleman Magazine.* "The Colt Dragoon on the Plains," by Tryon. I can't give the exact issue as I have lost it, but in this article it tells of 420 yard shooting results with this old cap and ball revolver in the early days when it was in everyday use. The results made this experimenter feel that his black powder gun was good for even greater ranges.

If still in doubt write to Captain Hardy, in care of Jake Engbrecht, range officer at the Los Angeles Police Revolver Club. He and a couple of dozen others are actively engaged in 300 and 400 yard pistol shooting. Or write to Jake Engbrecht himself, he is a nationally known shooter.

Sorry this letter is so long, but these fellows who write in attacking authors or others without going to the trouble of doing any research or having had experience on the point in question annoy me. "Peace Marshal" was a fine story. Too bad it was hurt for some who know little about guns by would-be gun cranks.

WE THANK these Camp-Fire followers for letters and comments:

Weston A. Berow, Oneida, N. Y.; C. D. Phillips, Los Angeles, Calif.; Paul C. Langdon, M. D.; C. Hunnell, Jr., Indianapolis, Ind.; Edmund Thorpe, Cleveland, Ohio; Gordon Gunter, University of Texas, Houston, Tex.; C. G. Rampton, Portland, Oreg.; P. J. Evans, Preston, Idaho; Jay B. Winton LeCompte, Detroit, Mich.; James E. Fitzgerald, Boston, Mass.; Harrison McElwaine, Saint John, N. B., Canada.

A WHILE back, you may recall, a reader from Washington State wanted to know if there really was an island somewhere where sailors did not dare leave the port because of wild bands of native women abducted poor and honest

sea-faring men and took them off into the mountains. Our inquirer had a bet on this matter—was it true or not?

We have some contributions on the subject. First is from John Humanitzki, of the *S. S. Garnet Hulings,* Continental Oil Co., Baltimore, Md., who says, "I hope the following information will aid Mr. Holden in winning his wager. In the November, 1937, issue of *The Rudder,* a magazine for yachtsmen, appeared an article by Walter MacArthur. I quote from it:

"'In the year 1896, the American ship *Bonanza* arrived at San Francisco and reported an experience during the passage of the South Seas, that transcended anything ever occurring previously.

"'As related by Captain Bergmann of the *Bonanza* the ship had fallen in with an island in the South Seas, the population of which consisted entirely of women.

"'The island of St. John, in the Hermit group, lies directly under the equator, a small island among the thousands in the vicinity.

"'Many of these islands were thought to be peopled by cannibals; so therefore Mariners steered clear of them.

"'It so happened that the *Bonanza* approached St. John with a light breeze. When a few miles off the beach, the ship became becalmed.

"'The seamen, whose fears began to arise, soon feared the worst, for coming out from the beach were several large canoes and fully manned.

"'The seamen's fears soon became dispelled because on closer approach the occupants of the canoes were seen to be dusky Amazons.

"'They clambered aboard and took over the ship. Before the men could say Boo, they had more offers of marriage than they could count on fingers and toes, and a recount.

"'They were even threatened with *forcible abduction.*'

"According to the article the seamen began praying for a breeze of wind to speed them away from that island and its occupants. (Which I personally doubt, my being a seaman!)

"Quote again:

"'Captain Bergmann estimated the population at about 2,000 women and 100 old men.

"'His explanation of the phenomenon was that the islands being cannibalistic, they raided one another to replenish the larder.

"'This reduced the male population quite a bit. Finally a Blackbirder came along and sailed away leaving none but the women and old men.

"'This is only one explanation of many that can be given concerning the population. There is no doubt about the existence of the island itself because the entire crew substantiated the captain's report.

"'A group was formed in Frisco called the United Brotherhood of the South Seas which fitted out a ship and crew who were to colonize this island.

"'They arrived in the South Seas, but it seems the island belongs to England and they were refused permission to colonize that certain island and were given a naval escort to whichever other island they wished to colonize.'"

ON the same subject, from A. J. Hawks of Guatemala City, C. A. (this information was sent also by A. C. Trumble, Chicago, Ill., and Harry Penhallurick, Edwall, Washington):

The origin of this tale you will find on page 374 in "'White Shadows of the South Seas" by Frederick O'Brien and published by the Century Co., 1919, about two years after his visit to the Marquesas Islands (French).

The book is illustrated by photographs and one of them shows the author among the ladies.

The above page shows one of his experiences, in which he had, to defend his honor, to hand the Amazon a right on the chin, "a la Americaine," ending the match.

It is to be noted that he had no further molestation on his trip to the mountains.

BUT Bill Bowie writes from Maplewood, N. J., signing himself "Your fellow explorer":

That island is known as Man-Hat-Tan on the Atlantic seaboard, east of Jersey. The young females capture a man and abduct him. They bring him either to a place called Bronx or Flatbush and force him to support them for life by going to work for them, usually in Lower New Yawk. This strange place is reached by an underground tunnel known as the subway. They travel in strange conveyances hanging by a belt looped over a pole attached to the ceiling. They become quite used to this serfdom.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

PUT your money on ice.

Request:—Will you please tell me just what happens when the ice goes out in Alaska? I understand that there is a sweepstake. Can you tell me how this is worked?

—Thomas P. Wilson,
Pueblo, Colo.

Reply by Mr. T. S. Solomons:—When the ice goes out it just suddenly all begins to slowly move, and it is a most impressive sight. But for days and days before, it has been making its preparations.

The ice rots. It is usually five to eight feet thick on the Yukon and Tanana Rivers, the latter being a large branch of the former. It forms perpendicular five or six-sided pyramidal crystals which are so loosely bound together that each crystal will sink a little on direct pressure. The snow has melted by this time, leaving the surface glare, or greenish, or more likely a dirty white. Vast amounts of surface water are poured out from the smaller streams, melting the ice completely near shore and thus freeing the main mass so it can move when it gets a chance. Then thinner patches melt. In the Fall when the freezing began there were crushed up ridges and all sorts of irregularities. Only in occasional areas is the winter ice smooth. Naturally that causes, in the spring melting, corresponding irregularities in the scheme of melting, rotting, wear from below, etc. Now you have, say for several miles or more, a section of river free from fastening either in shallows or at the banks, the whole mass able to move, if it were free below. What prevents it is a jam, or a bend, or a frozen place at the bank where there was shade and no warm entering water.

The whole river for miles above is being held by this solid place. But finally the jointure with the bank loosens, too. Below there is clear water, as the river has already broken there and moved down. Hence, suddenly, when the full freedom point is reached the whole mass, for miles, as if one body, moves. That's the river going out in that section. There is no such thing as the entire river of ice "going out" at one time. Always it goes in sections, and from below first, as one can see it must. But as these lower sections increase in number and length, greater space is made for farther and farther up-river masses. In the middle and upper reaches of the river, longer and longer sections are able to move, when they do move, and to move farther. On the middle and middle upper Yukon and Tanana, where the sweep-stakes is held, this is the situation.

At the town of Tanana, which is where the railroad comes down to the river from the south, and which is a hundred or so miles from the Yukon, a stake is set, with a line cross-wise of the river just an inch or so in front of the stake, and the moving of the ice makes the stake touch the wire line, records the time on an electric clock, and rings a bell. And the man or men who have guessed, and backed their guess with their

money, that it would happen on a given day, at a given hour and minute, or second, and who have come the nearest, take the "works" —thousand of dollars. About six divided that honor and profit this Spring.

WE don't want to start a fight, but—the Marines versus the Sixty-Ninth.

Request:—I would appreciate it very much if you would give me some information. I served with the Navy during the war, was a radio operator in the New York Navy Yard, and have been having plenty of arguments lately with a former officer of the old 69th Regiment as to the part the Marines played during the first part of the war. I believed that the Marines were in action (combat) before the 69th, in France. It so happens that I was the last one to see a cousin of mine, who I think was in the 5th Marines, sail from League Island Yard and I think it was in July, 1917. Of course, I may be wrong in this but it seems to me he was killed in action a month or so later. This is hotly denied by my friend of the 69th.

Do you know when the Marines first went up? He contends that all the Marines were used for in France was M. P. work. I wasn't over so I can't argue with him. Please give me whatever information you can and it will surely be appreciated.

—G. S. Enright, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Reply by Major F. W. Hopkins:—The 5th Regiment of Marines, (70 officers, 2,689 men) sailed on the *Henderson, DeKalb* and *Hancock*, on June 14, 1917, five weeks after the declaration of war. This regiment was soon joined in France by the 6th Marines, and the 6th MG Bn., and the 4th Brigade of Marines was formed. This brigade took part in eight engagements, was cited by the French three times, and the name of Belleau Wood was changed by the French Government to "Le Bois de Brigade de Marin" in their honor.

Units of the 1st Division, U. S. Army, were the first to see action in France, but the 4th Marine Brigade went into the front lines in March, 1918, (March 16-17) near Verdun. The 2nd Division which included the Marine Brigade did take part in the first vitally important battle, however, at Chateau Thierry, May 31 to June 5, 1918 and the first American offensive, beginning June 6, 1918.

Marines took part in the following operations: Verdun, Aisne Defense, Belleau Wood, (Chateau Thierry), Aisne Marne Offensive (Soissons), Marbache, St. Mihiel, The Champagne, Mont Blanc, St. Etienne, Leffincourt, Meuse Argonne, March to the Rhine.

U. S. Marine organizations also participated in the Champagne Marne Defensive, the Oise Aisne Offensive and the Ypres Lys Offensive, along with elements of the British Army. These operations, in Spring of 1918, were originally credited as major operations, but AEF HQ on June 2, 1919, rescinded the credit. This, however, did not alter the fact that they were battles in which Marines were killed, and that they resulted in the enemy being pushed back.

In addition to the operations in France with the Army, Marines served on the American Battleships which joined the British Grand Fleet on Dec. 17, 1917, at Scapa Flow. These battleships in the line of their duty with the Grand Fleet were attacked six times by German Submarines. They served on the other ships of the Navy, and ashore in England, and Ireland, and with Naval and Marine Aviation units in the Azores, France and Flanders.

	Officers	Enlisted men
Killed in action	45	1420
Died of wounds	30	961
Battle deaths	75	2381

Two Marine Officers sailed on Pershing's Staff, May, 1917.

A total of 834 officers and 30,481 men, totalling 31,315 Marines, served ashore in France during the period of the war.

The first Marines in action went in March 16th and 17th, 1918, at Verdun. Their first major offensive and battle was at Boureseches and Chateau Thierry, May 31 to June 5, and on through to July 5th, when they were relieved by the 26th Division.

Three French Regiments at one time were commanded by a U. S. Marine Officer (July 5 to 22, 1918).

The Fifth Regiment of Marines is stationed now at Quantico, Va., and the Sixth Regiment at San Diego, Calif. Both regiments have six silver bands on their regimental color pikes denoting major engagements in France. All personnel of both regiments wear the Foureguerre as part of the uniform of the regiment. Both regiments have had the Croix de Guerre awarded them as organizations.

Marines served in France from June 26, 1917, to Nov. 11, 1918 (and longer in the Army of Occupation.) This is a total of 504 days during the war period, 66 days in active sector, 71 in quiet sectors, totalling 137

days in the front lines, 367 days behind the lines, in training, SOS, or reserve, or rest billets. While in the SOS, the duties were mainly M.P.

This seems to go on and on, and on. Perhaps it will bolster up your argument, however. Don't forget for a moment that although we are talking about Marines, that we Marines are a part of the Navy and so we are really talking about our Navy's contribution to the A.E.F.

Ask your friend of the 69th how many times his regiment was cited in orders, whether it wears the Foureguerre as part of the uniform, how many battle record silver bands it has on its pikes, how many actual engagements it was in, whether the French named a woods after it.

I have just received a copy of Colonel Metcalf's new book, "A History of the U. S. Marine Corps." Putnam's published it, and it is the first complete record of the Corps since Collum's in 1881.

Send for the U. S. Printing Office publication, "The U.S. Marine Corps in the World War" by Major Edwin N. McClellan. It costs a dime.

Editor's Note. The Sixty-Ninth went into action Feb. 21, 1918, at Lorraine—Champaign and fought in this sector (Lunneville) until relieved on March 23.

THE gem in the tool chest.

Request:—Can you give me any information as to the commercial value of garnet?

I know of a wash in which at least 30% of the sand consists of black garnets ranging in size up to about ⅜ or ½ inch. A friend of mine states that garnet is worth about $140.00 per ton but does not know where to market it.

Is there any such value in garnet? And can you give me the names of any firms who are purchasing this material.

—B. S. Kenworthy, Culver City, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Victor Shaw:—The price of garnet used for abrasive purposes, the sole industrial use, depends largely upon its relative hardness and upon its kind. For example, the garnet bringing the highest prices for at least twenty-seven years in this country are the almandites mined in the Adirondack Mountains, Warren County, New York State. Essex County also used to produce some, but for the past ten years they have come from Warren County. The almandite is an iron-aluminum garnet, the common garnet of the aluminum group, and its color is usually black, although some gem stones are deep red.

These garnets brought, quarried, crushed, washed and concentrated, $85 a ton f. o. b. mines last year and the price is still unchanged. During the depression the price was very low with little demand, but since 1932 the demand has been increasing and the demand and price trend are both upward, now. The price quoted above was for almandites from Warren Co., N. Y. Most of the production was from N. Y., and the greater part of the rest came from Merrimac County, New Hampshire.

North Carolina used to produce some garnet. The New Hampshire garnet was sold at $30 a ton f. o. b. mines. There was also some good grade garnet imported from Spain last year, the price being c. i. f. port of entry, $60 a ton.

This garnet was all used to make abrasive paper and cloth used by the woodworking and shoe industries.

The Adirondacks have been the chief area of production for high grade abrasive-garnet since 1909. They occur in gneiss associated with amphibole, in an immense cliff-like deposit which is quarried in the usual way. The gneiss after blasting is run through a crusher to free the stones, which are then washed and picked out by hand, or concentrated by jigs. This jigging process separates the garnet and amphibole, which are nearly the same specific gravity.

Garnet is usually 6.5 in the scale of hardness, but the N. Y. garnet runs 7.5 and even 8 at times, thus bringing the higher price. There are many kinds of garnet and quite a few are too soft to make good abrasives. There is one other kind that has a black color, this being the kind termed "melanite," belonging to the andradite group of iron-calcium garnets. Probably yours is almandite, however.

Garnet has been mined in the Fresno district of California, also in Idaho, Montana, Utah, South Dakota and North Carolina, but costs of transportation, mining and treatment to put the product in shape for marketing play an important part.

I haven't a list of buyers, but you might write to the manager of the Adirondack garnet mine, which is at North River, Warren Co., N. Y. The mine is called: "North River Garnet Company." Send them a sample of your garnet, and they might state a price and either buy themselves, or list a few buyers for you, providing your garnet is of good grade.

Incidentally your friend's idea of a price of $140 a ton is not borne out by any I know.

A FOREST gone to sea: The *Thomas W. Lawson.*

Request:—A group of us at work in the Railway Mail Service have been having a hot discussion about the size of schooners. I decided to write you to settle the argument.

Some of the fellows claim there have been and are yet schooners with up to seven masts. I say no. Who's right?

—R. J. Mulligan,
New York, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. Charles H. Hall:—I am sorry to say that you are wrong. There have been schooners with two, three, four, five, six and seven masts and there are two, three and four-masters afloat and in service today. There are several Blue Nose four-masters that run to New York from Nova Scotia.

There have been a great many three-masters, some of them built more than a hundred years ago. The Bermuda schooner of 1834 had Marconi rig with overlapping, loose-footed sails in the "new" modern style.

The French built a four-masted schooner in 1800 and you'll find a picture of her in Commander Statham's book of Privateering.

Four-masters were built for commercial service in the 80's and were followed by five and six masters, though not so many of the latter were built. There was only one seven master, the *Thomas W. Lawson.* She was built of steel and ran coastwise for a number of years. She was a big vessel, 385 feet in length over all, 368 feet water line, 50 feet beam and 35.2 depth to the upper deck. She was built at Fore River, Mass., in 1902 and was lost on the Scilly Islands in 1907, all hands but one being lost.

A C.C.C. champ comes for advice.

Request:—I'd like to have a few pointers on boxing.

I am 19 years of age, weigh 155 pounds. I now hold the Western C. C. C. boxing championship. I've worked pretty hard for it and now I'm fighting to keep it.

Please name some of the nerve centers on a human body that could be hit to cause a knockout? Are kidney punches illegal? What is the best place to hit a person to tire him out?

Is a punch to the body with a turn of the wrist very effective?

How can you roll with a blow to the body?

When boxing what is the best way to get rid of a charley horse?

What is a good way to build up the muscles in your stomach?

Is it a good idea to go after an opponent and finish him fast?

Harold Roe,
Camp McKinley, Ore.

Reply by Captain Jean V. Grombach:—

There are two "knockout" or vital targets —the jaw or chin and the solar plexus. The usual effect is that a jaw or chin hit causes the numbness or loss of footing or leg coordination. Usually a boxer on the verge of a knockout from a blow on the jaw can think clearly but is wobbly and has lost his speed and coordination. A knockout to the solar plexus causes the loss of the thinking apparatus and sometimes of the wind.

A kidney punch or cut with the heel of the hand is illegal. A punch, however, legally begun which lands over the kidney because the boxer turns or twists into it is legal providing it is above the belt.

The body. If you are certain you are in better condition than your opponent then do the following: in clinches and before the "break-away," which of course should be "clean" (no hitting), give your man plenty of rights and lefts to the body which will help to wear him down. If on the other hand you want to nullify your opponent in fighting, tie up his hands with your arms. When breaking, however, hold his left elbow for a fraction of a second with your right glove and push or shove his right shoulder off with your left arm. This causes him to pivot with his right or best punch furthest away from you and sometimes leaves him open so you can step back in with a left hook to his body.

Forget the punch which you describe as being delivered with a turn of the wrist.

You don't roll but "slip" which means you draw up your stomach, pivot on your front foot, your rear foot gliding around.

A rest, or lay off or sometimes a "baking" will get rid of a charley horse. If, however, you are boxing with a charley horse, get warmed up by shadow boxing, as a charley horse is greatly reduced when the muscles are warmed up.

Build up the muscles of your stomach with body work and medicine ball work.

With regard to going after an opponent and finishing him fast, I would say it depends on many elements but generally speaking patience, and a good left hand should be used to start, mixed with caution.

THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelope and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.

Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. **He will** reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to the magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing or for employment.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon.)*

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure.*

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Matawan, N. J.

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Boxing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 304 W. Cook Av., Libertyville, Ill

Coins: *and Medals*—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Dogs—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

Fencing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, (Ozark Ripley), care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *salt water, bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, care of *Adventure.*

Football—JOHN B. FOSTER, care of *Adventure.*

Globe-trotting and vagabonding—ROBERT SPIERS BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure.*

Health Building Activities, Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Horses: *care, training of horses in general; jumping; and polo, the cavalry arm*—MAJOR R. ERNEST DUPUY, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping and Trailer Camping—MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M.D., 152 W. 65th St., N. Y. C.

Motorcycling—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, 174 Lyman Ave., Burlington, Vt.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 952 No. Hudson Av., Hollywood, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT WHITE, 913 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *foreign and American makes; wing shooting*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

★**Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec, Can.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Stamps—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Av., Denver, Colo.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, 980 Northwest Blvd., Columbus, Ohio.

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, New York City.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Pa.

Forestry: *in the United States, national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, 1091 Springdale Rd., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

Marine Architecture: *ship modeling*—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Av., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mining and Prospecting: *anywhere in No. America. Outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, 11628¾ Mayfield Ave., West Los Angeles, Calif.

The Merchant Marine. GORDON MACALLISTER, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Vehicles: *operation, legislative restrictions and traffic*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3508 Kings College Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, care of *Adventure.*

Railroads: *in the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

Taxidermy—EDWARD B. LANG 156 Joralemon St., Belleville, N. J.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE SUBJECTS

Army Matters: *United States and Foreign*—MAJOR GLEN R. TOWNSEND, 708 Angenette Ave., Kirkwood, Missouri.

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 81 Church St., Fair Haven, N. J.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—ALEC CAVADAS, 1296 E. Hastings, Vancouver, B. C.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, 81 Church St., Fair Haven, N. J.

U. S. Marine Corps—MAJOR F. W. HOPKINS, care of *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, 4630 Vineland Ave., No. Hollywood, Calif.

★New Guinea—L. P. B. ARMIT, care of *Adventure.*

★New Zealand: Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Yatina," 3 Lucknow St., Willoughby, N. S. W.

Hawaii—JOHN SNELL, Hawaii Equal Rights Comm., Honolulu, Hawaii.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon.*—V. B. WINDLE, care of *Adventure.* **2** *French Indo-China, Hong Kong, Macao, Tibet, Southern, Eastern and Central China.*—SEWARD S. CRAMER, care of *Adventure.* **3** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—PAUL H. FRANSON, Bldg. No. 3 Veterans Administration Facility, Minneapolis, Minn. **4** *Persia, Arabia.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **5** ★*Palestine.*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C.

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Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, care of *Adventure.*

Europe, Part 1 *Denmark, Germany.*—G. I. COLBURN, care of *Adventure.*

Central America—ROBERT SPIERS BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure.*

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care of *Adventure.* **2** *Venezuela, The Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil.*—DR. PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, care of *Adventure.*

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Labrador—WILMOT T. DEBELL, Severna Park, Md.

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Canada, Part 1 ★*Southeastern Quebec.*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 24 Plessis St., Quebec, Canada. **2** ★*Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin.*—S. E. SANGSTER, care *Adventure.* **3** ★*Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, *The Courier Advocate,* Trenton, Ont., Canada. **4** ★*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario, National Parks, Camping.*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 1163 Victoria Rd., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. **5** *Lake of Woods Region.*—R. F. LINCOLN, care of *The Minneapolis Tribune,* Minneapolis, Minn. **6** *Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C. **7** *Northern Saskatchewan, Indian life and language, hunting, trapping*—H. S. M. KEMP, 313 9th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask.

Alaska—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 952 No. Hudson ave., Hollywood, Calif.

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30x5.00-20	2.65	1.35
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28x5.25-19	2.90	1.35
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28x5.50-19	3.35	1.40
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.45
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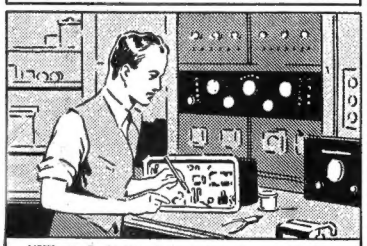

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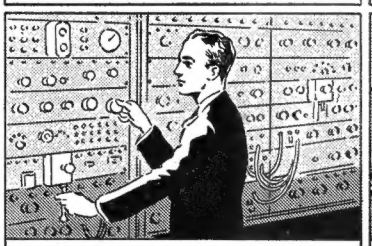

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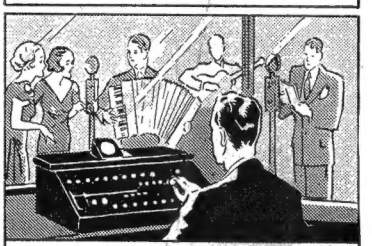

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